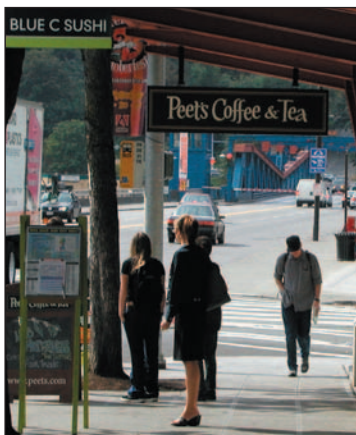


# Neighborhood Business District Strategy

*Proposed Land Use Code Amendments*



## Background Report



## **Department of Planning and Development Staff**

Diane Sugimura, DPD Director  
John Rahaim, DPD City Planning Director  
John Skelton, DPD Land Use Policy Manager

Jory Phillips, DPD Project Manager  
Lish Whitson, DPD Project Manager  
Mary Catherine Snyder, SDOT Parking Lead

## **City of Seattle Interdepartmental Team**

Dave Boyd, DON  
Lyle Bicknell, DPD  
Gordon Clowers, DPD  
Roque DeHererra, DPD  
Tom Hauger, DPD  
Rebecca Herzfeld, DON/Council Central Staff  
Barbara Gray, SDOT  
Margaret Klockars, Land Use Law Manager  
Andy McKim, DPD  
Susan McLain, DPD  
Dennis Meier, DPD  
Bob Morgan, Council Central Staff  
Alan Oiye, DPD  
Karen Tsao, Fleets & Facilities  
Mark Troxel, DPD  
Barbara Wilson, Seattle Planning Commission  
Nancy Yamamoto, OED

For more information on the Neighborhood Business District Strategy go to the NBDS website at [www.seattle.gov/dpd/planning/nbds](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/planning/nbds) or contact Lish Whitson, DPD Planner, at (206)233-0079 or [nbds@seattle.gov](mailto:nbds@seattle.gov).

## Executive Summary

At various times over the years, community people, developers, architects and business organizations have expressed concern with different parts of the Commercial Land Use Code, noting that it is sometimes easier to build a bad project than a good project. Following recommendations from the Mayor's Economic Opportunity Task Force in mid-2002, Mayor Greg Nickels directed the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) to work with citizens to review commercial code requirements and recommend improvements to the City's land use regulations as they apply to neighborhood business districts.

Development regulations that apply in neighborhood business districts were originally adopted in 1986. Since then, the Comprehensive Plan and Neighborhood Plans have been adopted, placing new focus on the importance of neighborhood business districts as the core of neighborhoods intended to accommodate the City's future growth. In addition, repeated amendments to the Land Use Code have made it more complex and difficult to use.

This report provides a foundation for the changes being considered to bring the City's land use regulations more in line with its goals. Its primary purpose is to explore the development that is occurring in Seattle's business districts, and to review the City's current regulations for commercial areas. It seeks to identify what is working with the regulations and what's not, where the City's goals for commercial areas are being met, and where the regulations are falling short.

Overall many things work:

- The City's regulations to ensure compatibility between commercial areas and adjacent residential areas appear to be appropriate.
- Design review allows opportunities for neighborhood-appropriate design solutions and for site-specific design solutions that enhance neighborhood quality.
- Height limits, and the general bulk and scale of buildings in commercial areas are generally appropriate to their environments.

Other things don't work as well:

- The regulations can be overly complicated, detailed and repetitive.
- The regulations can be too rigid, hindering, rather than fostering, good development.
- The regulations preclude uses, such as ground level housing, that could provide appropriate development on sites less suited for commercial development.
- The regulations can sometimes discourage vacant spaces from being reoccupied.
- The amount of parking required for new construction no longer matches measured demand for parking and don't support goals for pedestrian and transit-oriented environments.
- The regulations still allow features of buildings that can create unsafe or unattractive pedestrian environments including blank façades, surface parking along the street front or at the corner and multiple or very large curb cuts across sidewalks.

Finally, changes over the last twenty years provide new opportunities:

- The Comprehensive Plan and neighborhood plans provide a clearer direction about the types of neighborhoods citizens want to create.

- Experience with development under the current Land Use Code provides insights into improvements that can be made.
- The success of the design review program has shown that flexibility can improve design and create better projects.

The information in this report will be used to develop a new land use code that is simpler to use and that provides appropriate flexibility to encourage the type of development the City and neighborhoods want.



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## I. Goals for Neighborhood Business Districts

### A. *The Urban Village Strategy*

Seattle's neighborhood business districts are the foundation of the City's urban village strategy, which links strong business districts to vital residential neighborhoods through improved pedestrian and transit access. This urban village strategy is central to the City's plans for future growth under the City's Comprehensive Plan.

The City of Seattle adopted its Comprehensive Plan in 1994 in response to Washington State's Growth Management Act (GMA), which requires most counties and cities to prepare a plan that demonstrates how new growth will be accommodated. The goals of the GMA include:

- ▶ Reduce urban sprawl
- ▶ Encourage future development to occur in urbanized areas where facilities and services already exist
- ▶ Maintain transportation, housing and open space opportunities, and
- ▶ Protect the environment

Each city's plan needs to describe how the city will manage expected population growth through policies that address land use, transportation, housing, capital facilities, and utilities.

The main principle behind Seattle's Comprehensive Plan is sustainability – the idea that present generations will manage resources in ways that allow future generations to prosper. That principle, combined with Seattle's existing

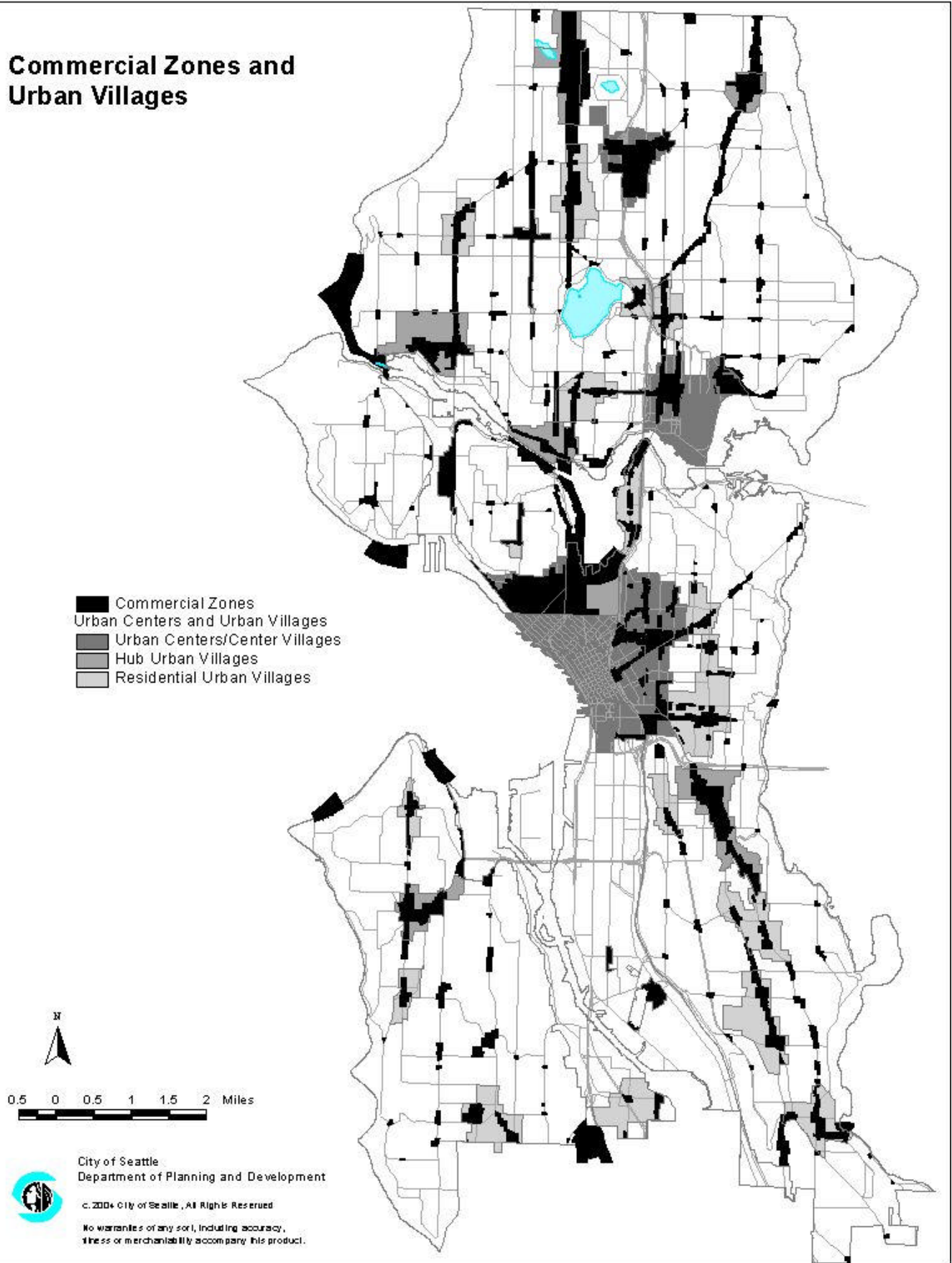
development pattern, led to the Urban Village Strategy:

- ▶ Growth should occur in relatively small concentrated locations where zoning already permits that growth.
- ▶ Growth should occur where City services already exist or could be efficiently provided.
- ▶ New services should go to areas where they are accessible to the people who would use them.
- ▶ Growth should occur in areas where people have access to a number of different transportation modes, including walking, biking and taking transit.
- ▶ Growth should support existing cultural facilities.

By concentrating new development in relatively small geographic areas, the City is able to accomplish several goals:

- Take the City's share of expected regional growth
- Revitalize existing neighborhood business districts
- Minimize impacts on most single-family neighborhoods
- Make efficient use of past and future City infrastructure investments, and
- Promote higher levels of pedestrian and transit travel.

## Commercial Zones and Urban Villages



In order to acknowledge differences among neighborhoods, the Comprehensive Plan designates three types of urban villages. Urban villages differ, in part, in the amount and type of commercial area that they contain.

The heart of each center and village is intended to be a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented commercial district that serves the employment, service, retail and housing needs of Seattle's residents and businesses. Although urban villages only make up 19% of Seattle's land area, 69% of Seattle's commercial land is within urban centers and villages.

Most commercial growth will occur within urban centers and villages: currently 85% of the City's zoned capacity for new jobs is within urban centers and villages.

Commercial areas outside of urban centers and villages will see less development, but continue to provide accessible goods and services to surrounding areas. In those areas, however, maintaining the current character and not diverting significant growth away from urban centers and villages are key goals.



### Seattle's Urban Village Categories

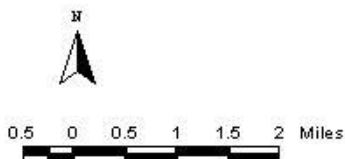
Seattle's five **Urban Centers** (Downtown Seattle, Uptown Queen Anne, First Hill/Capitol Hill, University and Northgate) are the areas in Seattle with the greatest urban density and the widest range of land uses. They are located along the path of planned light rail and monorail lines. Some urban centers are split into "urban center villages" to recognize different neighborhoods within the urban center, such as Pioneer Square and Belltown within the broader Downtown Urban Center. Zoning in urban centers are areas that can accommodate a broad mix of activity, including at least 50 jobs/acre and a minimum of 15 households/acre. Retail uses and services are aimed at citywide and regional markets, as well as the neighborhood.

The seven **Hub Urban Villages** (Ballard, Bitter Lake, Fremont, Lake City, North Rainier, South Lake Union and West Seattle Junction) are also intended to accommodate a broad range of land uses, but at density levels generally lower than those in urban centers. In addition to providing goods and services for residents of both the village and the broader community they are intended to be employment centers that allow people to live close to where they work.

There are eighteen **Residential Urban Villages** (23<sup>rd</sup> Ave. @ S. Jackson-Union, Admiral, Aurora-Licton Springs, Columbia City, Crown Hill, Eastlake, Green Lake, Greenwood/Phinney Ridge, Madison-Miller, MLK@Holly St., Morgan Junction, North Beacon Hill, Rainier Beach, Roosevelt, South Park, Upper Queen Anne, Wallingford and Westwood-Highland Park). These areas are intended to have a stronger residential focus. Commercial areas in residential villages provide a broad range of goods and services for the surrounding area. Employment for residents of the neighborhood is not as important a goal for these areas as it is for other areas.

## Seattle's Commercial Zones

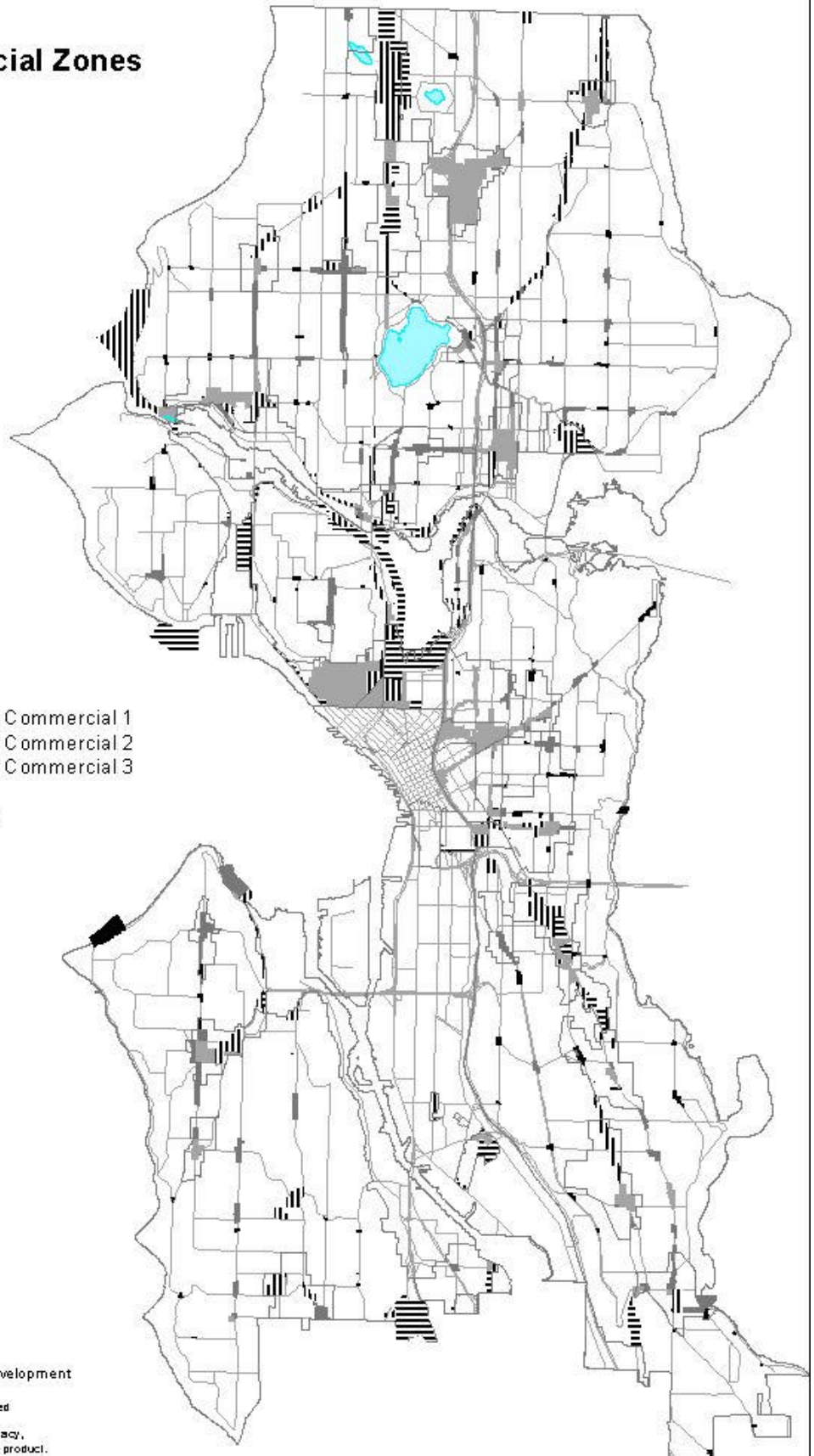
- Commercial Zones
-  Neighborhood Commercial 1
  -  Neighborhood Commercial 2
  -  Neighborhood Commercial 3
  -  Commercial 1
  -  Commercial 2



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## **B. *Seattle's Business Districts and Commercial Zones***

At the core of Seattle's diverse urban neighborhoods are commercial areas that address a range of goals. According to the Comprehensive Plan, business districts in Seattle are intended to:

- ▶ Provide the goods and services needed by the City's residents and businesses.
- ▶ Serve the surrounding neighborhoods.
- ▶ Provide for a mix of business activities.
- ▶ Encourage business creation, expansion and vitality.
- ▶ Provide a wide range of characters and functions.
- ▶ Offer employment opportunities for the city's diverse residential population.
- ▶ Include housing that fits with the commercial function of the area.
- ▶ Be pedestrian-friendly and transit oriented.
- ▶ Be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, and
- ▶ In some cases, transform automobile-oriented areas into cohesive mixed-use pedestrian environments.

Seattle's policies divide commercial areas into two general types: pedestrian-oriented Neighborhood Commercial areas and more automobile-oriented General Commercial areas.

### **1. Pedestrian-Oriented Zones (Neighborhood Commercial 1, 2, and 3)**

Pedestrian-oriented zones are intended to have, or provide for:

- ▶ Strong healthy business districts that are compatible with their neighborhoods;
- ▶ Promotion of a sense of belonging;
- ▶ Essential goods, services and livelihoods for the residents of the city;
- ▶ Appropriate transitions in the scale and intensity of development between areas;
- ▶ Residential development that is both livable for residents and compatible with the desired commercial function of the area; and
- ▶ Active, attractive, accessible pedestrian environments.

They are most appropriate in areas close to residential populations.

Seattle currently has three basic pedestrian-oriented commercial zones: Neighborhood Commercial 1, 2 and 3. These three levels differ primarily in the intensity of uses allowed and their preferred location. All three zones provide locations for single purpose commercial structures, multi-story mixed-use development, with commercial uses along the street front, and multi-story residential structures.



The Neighborhood Commercial 1 (NC1) zone is comprised of small areas, primarily businesses providing convenience retail sales and services to the adjoining neighborhood. These are the corner grocery stores and cafes in areas surrounded by single-family neighborhoods. The biggest of these areas include the business districts at Alki, Seward Park, Maple Leaf and Madison Park.



NC1 development in Seward Park

Neighborhood Commercial 2 (NC2) zones are pedestrian-oriented shopping areas that provide a full range of household and personal goods and services, including convenience and specialty goods, to the surrounding neighborhoods. They are generally larger than NC1 areas. Examples include much of the Wallingford, Queen Anne, 23<sup>rd</sup> and Union, and Admiral business districts.



NC2 development in Green Lake

The Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC3) zones differ from NC2 zones, in that they are intended to serve both surrounding neighborhood and a larger community or citywide clientele. They allow for comparison shopping with a wide range of retail goods and services. Finally, unlike other neighborhood commercial zones, they may provide offices and business support services that are compatible with and support the retail character of the area. Broadway, the University District, Lake City, and Uptown Queen Anne all have large concentrations of the NC3 zone.



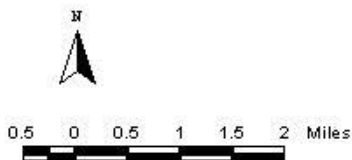
NC3 development in 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue



## Seattle's Pedestrian and Residential Commercial Zone Designations

Designations

-  Pedestrian 1
-  Pedestrian 2
-  Residential



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In addition to the three basic pedestrian-oriented commercial zones, Seattle has three designations that apply in neighborhood commercial areas, and direct the uses and/or development standards in the area. These designations are intended to reflect and enhance special characteristics and conditions of an area.

The Pedestrian 1 and Pedestrian 2 (P1, P2) designations were created to preserve or encourage intensely retail and pedestrian-oriented shopping districts where non-automobile transportation to and within the district are strongly favored. The P1 designation encourages an intensively pedestrian-oriented shopping area through limited street-level uses and design standards, restrictions on parking location and access, and lower parking requirements.

In general, the P2 designation is applied to smaller scale, less intensely developed neighborhood business areas than the P1 designation. The P2 designation also applies to commercial areas with more constrained parking than is available in P1 areas. The P1 and P2 designations differ in terms of their respective parking waivers, and parking location requirements. Both designations apply to areas that feature

excellent transit, bicycle and pedestrian access. Nearly all Pedestrian-designated areas are located within urban villages. All Pedestrian-designated areas are located within NC2 and NC3 zones. Most of NC zones are located within urban villages.

The Neighborhood Commercial/Residential (NC/R) designation was created for urban centers or urban villages to allow neighborhoods to maintain existing residential uses and/or promote increased residential development in a commercial area. This designation provides locations for moderate density residential development in single purpose and mixed-use structures within the commercial area, and limits single-purpose commercial development. The NC/R designation can only be applied to NC2 and NC3 zones, and has been applied outside of the central business districts in neighborhoods like Columbia City, North Beacon Hill and Madison-Miller.

	<b>Pedestrian 1</b>	<b>Pedestrian 2</b>	<b>Residential</b>
<b>Neighborhood Commercial 1</b>	Columbia City	Madison Park	
<b>Neighborhood Commercial 2</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> Avenue; North Beacon Hill; Laurelhurst (Sandpoint @ 45 <sup>th</sup> ); Rainier Beach	15 <sup>th</sup> East (Capitol Hill); 23 <sup>rd</sup> & Union; Fremont; Green Lake; Greenwood; Hillman City; Ravenna (25 <sup>th</sup> Ave NE); Upper Queen Anne	Madison/Miller, North Beacon Hill, Columbia City, MLK@Holly St.
<b>Neighborhood Commercial 3</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> Avenue; Ballard; Broadway; First Hill; Lake City; North Rainier; Rainier Beach; University Way (The Ave); Uptown Queen Anne  Light rail station areas	Ballard; Rainier Beach; Roosevelt; West Seattle Junction (California)	23 <sup>rd</sup> & Jackson-Union

## 2. Automobile-Oriented Zones (General Commercial 1 and 2)

Automobile-oriented general commercial areas are intended to:

- ▶ Accommodate activities highly dependent on automobile access;
- ▶ Permit the broadest range of commercial activities;
- ▶ Provide locations for more intensive commercial and light manufacturing uses; and
- ▶ Provide transitions between industrial areas where housing is not appropriate and residential or neighborhood commercial areas.

General Commercial zones are seen as generally incompatible with pedestrian-oriented residential and mixed-use development. They are most appropriate in auto-oriented commercial areas along major arterials with large lots and limited pedestrian access or as transitions between industrial areas and more residentially- or pedestrian-oriented zones.

There are two categories of general commercial zones, Commercial 1 and 2. These zones differ in how much they accommodate heavier retail compared to non-retail commercial uses, and their appropriateness for housing.

General Commercial 1 (C1) areas are auto-oriented, primarily retail and service-oriented commercial areas that serve surrounding neighborhoods and the larger community or citywide clientele. These areas provide a wide range of commercial services, including retail, offices and business support services, and may also provide for residential uses at limited densities. North Rainier, University Village and much of the Aurora Avenue corridor have C1 zoning.



Commercial 1 development in Rainier Beach

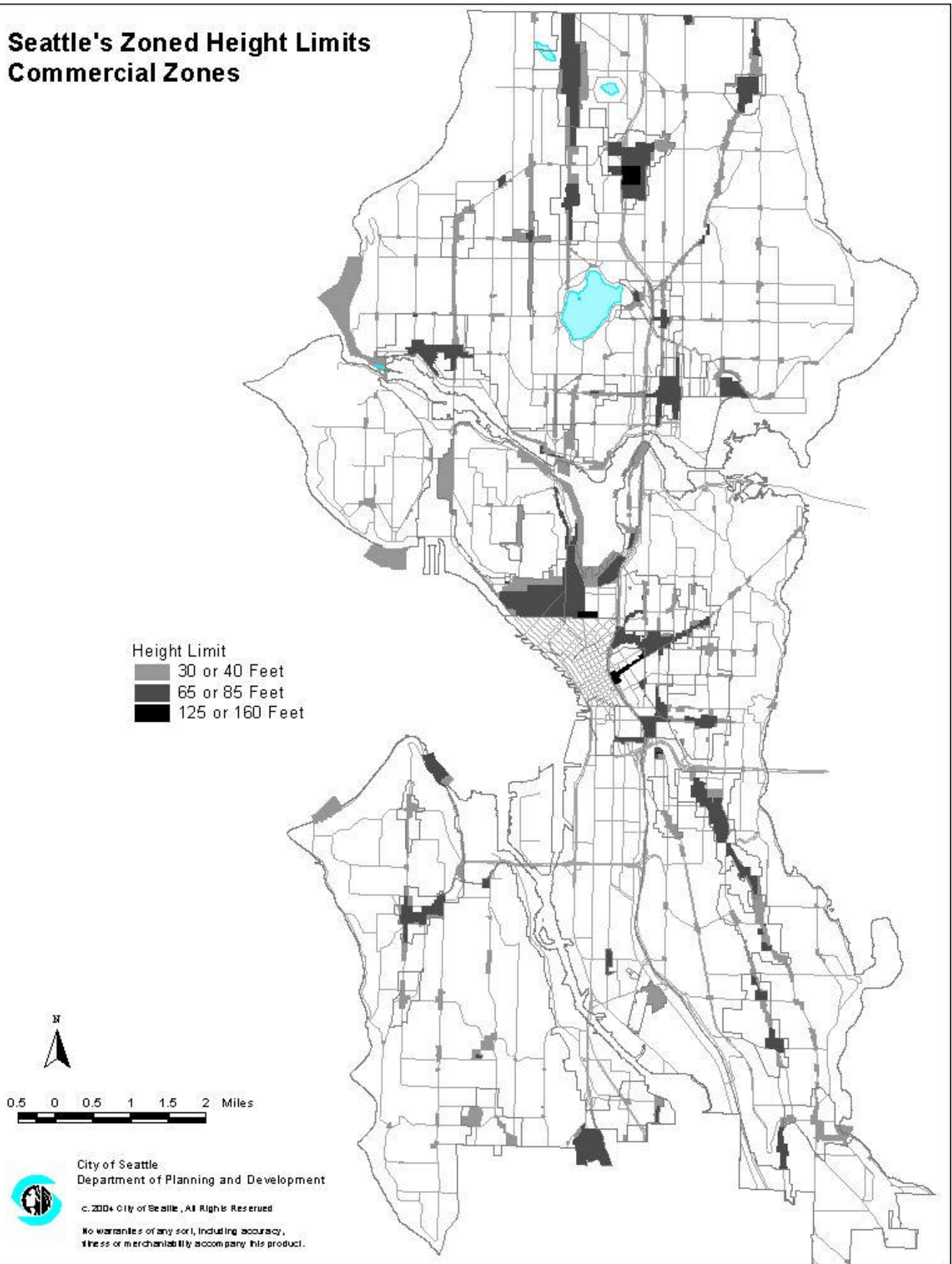
General Commercial 2 (C2) areas are auto-oriented, primarily non-retail commercial areas that provide a wide range of commercial activities serving a citywide function. These areas provide employment opportunities, business support services and locations for light manufacturing and warehouse uses, and may also provide for residential uses at limited densities.

Examples include west Lake Union, the blocks directly south of Dearborn Street at the south end of the Chinatown/International District and the Duwamish Industrial area, most of 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue South in South Park, and the Mercer/Valley Street corridor.



Commercial 2 Development in Bitter Lake

## Seattle's Zoned Height Limits Commercial Zones





### 3. Building Heights

In Seattle's commercial zones, height limits are applied independently of zoning. Height limits for commercial areas may range from thirty (30) feet to one hundred and sixty (160) feet. A number of different factors are considered when designating the height limit in a specific location, including:

- ▶ The character of the surrounding area: higher height districts are more appropriate nearer to Downtown Seattle than in areas surrounded by low-density residential zones.
- ▶ Topographical conditions and views: height limits are intended to reinforce the natural topography of an area and reduce the potential for view blockage.
- ▶ The urban village strategy: higher heights are generally more appropriate in urban centers, which will have the best transit access and accommodate the highest densities.
- ▶ Neighborhood Plans: neighborhood plans adopted by the City Council can also influence the appropriate heights of an area, by indicating a height is most appropriate for the area.

These considerations have resulted in heights being mapped that reflect the desired intensity of the zone. The lowest intensity NC1 zone is generally mapped with height limits of 30 feet or 40 feet. The more intensive NC3 zone is more likely to be mapped with heights of 65 feet or more.

### 4. Overlays

For areas where significant changes are expected or special attention to the commercial environment is warranted, the City has created a number of overlays. These overlays provide additional direction regarding appropriate uses and/or development standards in the areas where they are applied. They are called overlays, because their requirements augment the basic zoning.

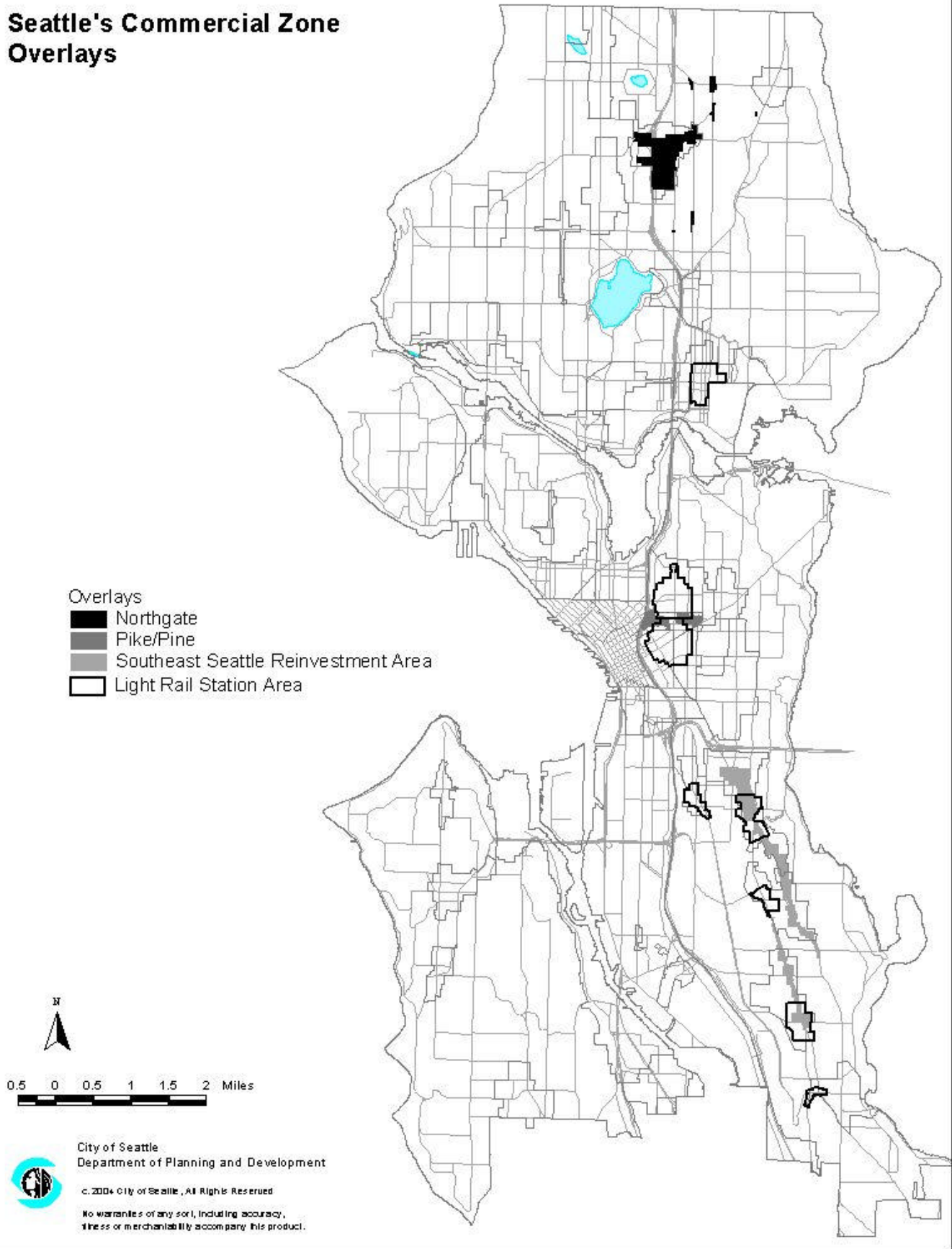
Overlays can shape the mix of uses in an area:

- The Southeast Seattle Reinvestment Area restricts low-density, heavy commercial uses such as outdoor storage
- The Pike/Pine Overlay encourages residential development and discourages large single-purpose commercial structures.
- Station Area Overlays discourage automobile-oriented uses.

They can also control development standards:

- The Ballard Avenue and Columbia City Landmark Districts provide guidelines for development in the district to further goals for the preservation and enhancement of the heritage of the community.
- Pike/Pine creates requirements to support a retail street front along Pike and Pine streets. Allows residential at street level on side streets.
- The Station Area Overlays remove some development standards in order to encourage development near the stations.

## Seattle's Commercial Zone Overlays



## 5. Other similar zones

In addition to the commercial zones and overlays, a number of other zones allow for mixed-use development and may provide models for changes to the commercial land use code. These zones include the Seattle Cascade Mixed zone, which is applied in the Cascade neighborhood in South Lake Union, the Downtown zones, the highest density multifamily zones, and the residential-commercial designation which is applied to multifamily zones.

### **Seattle Cascade Mixed:**

The SCM zone was created to implement ideas in a neighborhood plan for the Cascade neighborhood in South Lake Union. SCM differs from the commercial zones in a number of ways: height limits are generally higher than are permitted in other zones, and are attached to specific zones, rather than mapped separately; limits on the amount of lot area a project can cover are set, the amount of amenity space required for residential buildings in both the SCM and the downtown zones is 5% of floor area for buildings over 20 units.

### **Downtown Mixed Commercial:**

The DMC zone is intended for office, retail and commercial uses supportive of the Downtown Office Core, along with housing and services for that housing. Building heights and densities are intended to provide a transition between the office core and the surrounding lower-density neighborhoods. Incentives are given for provisions of pedestrian and transit facilities.

### **Downtown Mixed Residential**

The DMR zone is intended to provide a dense residential environment, where some commercial uses are permitted. It is split into DMR/Residential and DMR/Commercial zones. Both zones require a minimum lot area for the tallest buildings. Lot coverage requirements are set for floors above 65 feet, maximum wall dimensions are set, and minimum façade heights are applied, to encourage a lively, dense downtown residential environment.

### **Downtown Retail Core**

The DRC zone was developed to enhance the intensely retail environment in the downtown retail core. Street level setbacks are limited, small upper-level setbacks are required for taller buildings, and maximum façade lengths are set. Incentives are provided for features that support concentrated retail development.

### **Midrise and Highrise zones**

The MR and HR zones allow small commercial spaces that support the residents of these dense multifamily zones. In midrise zones, they are permitted adjacent to commercial areas. In HR areas they are permitted throughout the zone.

### **Residential-Commercial Designation**

The Residential-Commercial designation was introduced to allow flexibility for multifamily sites adjacent to commercial areas, either to allow for commercial/mixed-use development in those areas, or to allow for parking accessory to an adjacent business district to be located in a multifamily area. Commercial uses up to a maximum size limits are permitted only in mixed-use structures.

### **C. History of the Current Commercial Land Use Code**

Seattle's commercial land use regulations have evolved over the last century, and have been amended frequently over time to respond to changes in the city's goals and to respond to changes in the economy. The last time Seattle adopted a new commercial land use code was in 1986, almost thirty years after the previous code had been adopted in 1957, and approximately ten years since the City had adopted new growth policies.

For a number of reasons, including population loss and the growth of the suburbs, the environmental and historic preservation movements, and concerns about neighborhood quality, Seattle revised its goals for the future in the 1970s. City planners undertook efforts to modernize the city's zoning codes and comprehensive plan. Publications included "Seattle 2000" Goals (1973), Growth Policies (1977), Land Use Policies (1978), an economic development policy (1981) and Neighborhood Commercial Areas Land Use Policies (1981), and Single Family and Multi-Family Land Use Policies (1982).

The 1981 Neighborhood Commercial Area Policies included the following goals for commercial zones:

- ▶ improved economic viability of districts;
- ▶ adequate provision of commercial services throughout the city;
- ▶ efficient use of land;
- ▶ compatibility with surroundings;
- ▶ reduced dependence on automobiles, and
- ▶ better energy conservation.

In 1986, the City adopted a system of Commercial (C) and Neighborhood Commercial (NC) zones reflective of those goals.

Pre-1986 zoning was said to be too rigid, burdensome on businesses and inadequate in controlling traffic, parking and land use character impacts. The system included four commercial zones, with fixed height limits of 35 or 60 feet for most areas, but unlimited heights permitted under a height exception. It regulated development primarily according to land uses rather than development standards. Residential uses were conditional uses in commercial zones.

#### **1986: Neighborhood Commercial Land Use Policies Adopted**

- ▶ Created 5 Zoning Categories: NC1, NC2, NC3, C1, C2
- ▶ Created 2 Pedestrian Districts: P1, P2
- ▶ Shifted from controlling uses to using development standards as a way to limit impacts
- ▶ Height limits are applied separately from zoning classifications
- ▶ Allowed housing outright in Commercial areas, removed density limits for residential uses

The 1986 C and NC zoning system (Ord. 112777 and 113263) embraced development standards as a way to more directly affect the physical "building envelope" and character of development. This was seen as a more "performance-oriented" approach that would better control impacts on surrounding areas. Mapping height limits independently of the zones, new pedestrian designations and expanded mixed-use housing capabilities provided greater flexibility to tailor zoning to different areas.



### 1988: Amendments to Housing Policies for Commercial Areas

- ▶ Prohibited residential-only structures in NC1 zones
- ▶ Made all residential development a conditional use in C2 zones
- ▶ Required a specific amount of commercial area in order to qualify as mixed-use
- ▶ Set new open space requirements for residential uses
- ▶ Setbacks for upper-level residential space introduced
- ▶ Established density limits for single-purpose residential uses
- ▶ Made single-purpose residential structures conditional uses

In 1988, the standards for structures which mixed residential and commercial uses were extensively amended by two ordinances (Ord. 113892 and 113985.) Changes made in 1988 included prohibiting single-purpose residential development in the NC1 zone, making residential uses conditional uses in the C2 zone, identifying a minimum amount of commercial space that would qualify a structure as mixed-use, setting open space standards for mixed-use projects and defining the upper-level dimensions of mixed-use structures.

### Commercial Area Overlays

#### 1992: Southeast Seattle Reinvestment Area

- ▶ Prohibited certain heavy commercial uses in Southeast Seattle
- ▶ Enhanced opportunities for rezones to promote job growth.

#### 1993: Northgate Area Overlay

- ▶ Rezoned some Northgate areas from C to NC to promote pedestrian-oriented development
- ▶ Created a General Development Plan requirement
- ▶ Lowered permitted residential densities

#### 1995: Pike/Pine Overlay

- ▶ Reduced the maximum permitted size of commercial use to two floors.
- ▶ Required street-level use on certain streets and allowed residential-only structures everywhere else.

#### 2001: Light Rail Station Area Overlays

- ▶ Prohibited certain auto-oriented uses around future light-rail stations.
- ▶ Regulated access to parking.
- ▶ Permitted single-purpose residential structures outright unless in a pedestrian-designated zone where retail sales and services are required at street level.

Starting in 1992 with the Southeast Seattle Reinvestment Area (SESRA) overlay, the City started to use overlay zones to define distinct standards for areas with special objectives, such as Northgate (1993), Pike/Pine (1995), and areas around future light rail stations (1999 and 2001). These overlays provide flexibility or more specific direction within the code to help shape a specific area's character. Although each of these overlays had unique goals, they all focused, in part, on creating a more pedestrian-oriented environment.

### 1994: Comprehensive Plan adopted

- ▶ Set out the Urban Village Strategy
- ▶ Created the NC/R Designation
- ▶ Limited residential and office densities in C1 and C2 zones unless projects were built to the standards of the NC zone.

### Comprehensive Plan/Mixed-Use Study Implementation

- ▶ Set higher density limits for residential-only structures outside of urban villages
- ▶ Set standards for the depth, percent of building frontage, and minimum height for ground-floor commercial spaces in mixed-use structures
- ▶ Set upper-level lot coverage limits

### Design Review adopted

- ▶ Required projects above certain thresholds to undergo a public Design Review process
- ▶ Permitted development standard flexibility if approved by the Design Review board.

processes for this plan (Ord. 117430 and 117434), planning staff sought to adjust zoning to better advance the Urban Village strategy, while acknowledging the Mayor's request that the plan not result in significant zoning changes. At the same time, dissatisfaction with the types of mixed-use structures that were being built led to changes to standards for those buildings.

A number of changes were made at the time.

- In order to begin the transformation of auto-oriented areas to pedestrian-oriented areas, a density limit was added to the C zones citywide that applied to new residential and office structures unless they were built to NC standards.
- Neighborhood plans were given the opportunity to identify if and where they wanted to permit single-purpose residential structures outright, or if they

### Housing in Business Districts

Many of the amendments to the commercial zone regulations have involved residential uses in commercial areas. Generally there has been a trend toward encouraging more residential uses in commercial areas, both as a result of a shift in City policy toward transit-oriented mixed-use areas, and in response to reductions in residential densities permitted in multifamily zones.

**1986:** Residential density was treated the same as commercial density, e.g., residential uses needed to fit within the defined building envelope, but no specific limit on the number of units permitted on a site was set.

**1988-1990:** Density limits were reduced in multifamily zones. This caused commercial zones to become more attractive for residential development. Subsequently, upper level coverage limits were imposed for mixed-use development to control the bulk of new development. Density limits were established for single-purpose residential structures in commercial zones that reflected limits in lowrise zones.

**1994-1996:** During and after adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, the City sought systematic changes to encourage mixed-use development within Urban Centers and Villages, and discourage dense residential or office uses in C zones outside Urban Centers and Villages where not preferred. However, the outcome was more basic: lower densities in the C zones unless new structures were built to NC standards. A separate action was creation of the Pike-Pine overlay district, which permitted single-purpose residential structures on side streets and limited commercial development throughout the neighborhood.

**Recent years:** Light rail station area overlay districts encourage mixed-use and residential development, along with commercial development appropriate for the vicinities of light-rail stations. These overlays shift preferences toward including residential uses by allowing more upper-level bulk in structures in station areas, and by allowing single-purpose residential structures outright except where a pedestrian overlay is mapped.

wanted to permit them outright. In most areas where neighborhoods did not make that choice, single-purpose residential structures are permitted if identified conditions are met.

- Density limits were added for single-purpose residential structures that permitted higher densities inside urban villages than outside.
- Standards for the depth, percentage of building frontage, and minimum height for ground-floor commercial spaces were revised for mixed-use buildings, in order to ensure that ground floor spaces would be sized to meet commercial users' needs.
- Upper-level lot coverage limits for mixed-use structures were amended.
- The Neighborhood Commercial/Residential designation was established. Originally intended to identify commercial areas where housing was

**1996:**

Ord. 117943 allowed additional roof height for certain demonstration projects.

**2000:**

Ord. 119837 adjusted requirements for housing on First Hill and in Downtown retail core.

**2001:**

Ord. 120267 allowed additional height in South Lake Union as a special exception;

Ord. 120374 clarified single-purpose residential development for Seattle Housing Authority;

Ord. 120535 allowed car-sharing programs to use accessory parking;

Ord. 120541 adjusted parking requirements for lower-income housing;

**2003:**

Ord. 121018 allowed additional height for structures containing multi-purpose retail stores;

Ord. 121051 amended allowable density in NC zones with 160' limits on First Hill

encouraged by allowing single-purpose residential structures outright, along with more flexible development standards.

In addition, and perhaps more significantly, the Design Review program was established in 1994 (Ord. 116909.) It requires a public design review process for many commercial and mixed-use proposals, to help improve overall architectural design quality.

Through design review, projects may receive departures from development standards if the departure can improve the building.

In recent years, most of the changes to the land use code have been minor. These changes have often been instigated in order to address challenges encountered by desirable development. By their nature, these amendments have added to the complexity of the code and identify a need for a more flexible process that can address the needs of desirable projects without

requiring the costly and complicating amendment of the land use code.

## Summary

Planning and zoning trends over the past 25 years illustrate a slow progression toward basing zoning policies on the Comprehensive Plan, as well a trend of increasing complexity and attention to detail.

This can be interpreted both positively and negatively. In positive terms, the policy and regulatory framework is now better tailored and adapted toward achieving desired outcomes (for example, adjusting parking requirements to reflect the lower car-ownership rates of low-income households, can reduce the costs of building low-income housing). In negative terms, the Land Use Code's complexity makes it difficult to understand and use and potentially increases regulatory barriers through the accumulation of detailed requirements.

The foundational work on the commercial zoning system in the 1970s and 1980s helped provide a rational system based on planning principles that are still relevant. This included greater interest in mixing residential and commercial uses, improving neighborhood compatibility and pedestrian orientation, and increasing flexibility in development standards. These principles were also incorporated into the 1994 Comprehensive Plan and continue to inform the City's review of development proposals, including the Design Review process.

Overall, the current land use code is not inconsistent with the City's urban village strategy. Growth is generally directed to urban centers and villages and the pedestrian-orientation of areas within urban villages is often enhanced through new development. However, the code is not currently set up to further the City's goals for vibrant pedestrian-oriented commercial

districts; instead it is intended to maintain the existing character of each commercial district, without encouraging much change or transformation.

## **D. Neighborhood Plans**

Beyond citywide goals and policies that have been adopted into the Comprehensive Plan, Neighborhood Plans have been adopted that include recommendations for commercial areas. Common themes across neighborhood plans are apparent even though each plan uniquely expresses its policies and recommendations. However, broadly speaking, each neighborhood plan seeks similar sorts of vital pedestrian-oriented business districts, people-friendly streetscapes and complementary mixed-use districts, all with sufficient parking and appropriate transitions to nearby low-density residential areas.

Overall, neighborhood plans were interested in encouraging denser, more active and better designed urban villages and centers. However, given the variety of urban villages and the specific nature of many requests in the neighborhood plans, the visions for these environments varied based on current character.

Neighborhood plans reflect the existing character and aspirations of each neighborhood, which contributes to some variety in perspectives (the University District, for example, has different priorities than South Park). Among the most important differences in neighborhood plans are:

1. neighborhoods are at different stages in their evolution;
2. some neighborhoods express a preference for or against allowing multifamily residential development at ground level in commercial areas;
3. some neighborhoods express interest in neighborhood-specific code requirements, design guidelines or specialized planning activities.



### **1. Similar themes among Neighborhood Plans**

#### **Town Center or business core emphases**

Each of the neighborhood plans supports the development or further improvement of their commercial centers as vital hubs of commercial, residential and recreational activity. Many of these neighborhoods (such as the Admiral and Green Lake neighborhoods) have one or two existing commercial centers, while others (such as Wallingford and Delridge) are more oriented to commercial areas arranged along corridors. The Town Centers of each neighborhood are generally depicted as active, people-oriented areas with attractive public spaces and a mixture of uses.

#### **Emphasis on economic revitalization and new development**

Most of the neighborhood plans seek to revitalize their business districts and accommodate new development that contributes to tangible improvements. These themes recognize that healthy businesses and a sufficient density of residents are essential parts of neighborhoods. The neighborhood plans helped residents grapple with the reality of growth and create concepts to positively influence change in ways that support neighborhood character.



### Pedestrian-friendly and aesthetically pleasing streetscapes

Nearly all of the neighborhood plans express concepts for improvement of the aesthetic quality and pedestrian-supporting qualities of the urban environment. Often, this is expressed through preferences for sidewalk improvements, new aesthetic treatments, creation or reinforcement of pedestrian routes, traffic safety improvements and other amenities that create a pedestrian-supportive environment.



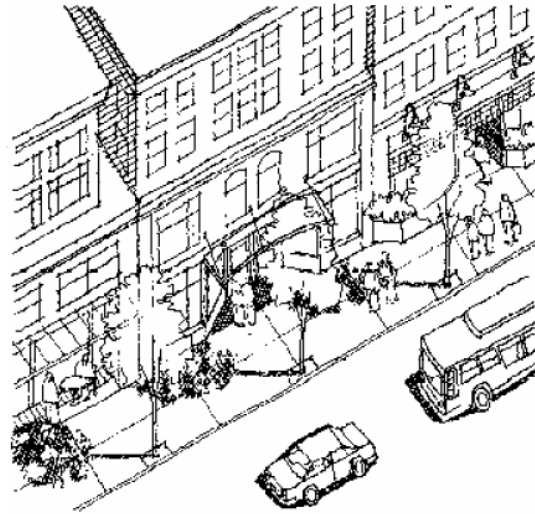
### Transportation and parking systems that work

Most of the neighborhood plans discuss preferred improvements to the street system that would aid in traffic safety, relieve congestion, and provide for better circulation. Several of the plans also discuss parking topics that generally seek to retain sufficient on-street capacity and also ensure sufficient off-street capacity is provided as new development occurs. Several of the plans also cited interests in retaining or attaining good transit service.

### Interest in building design and relationship to neighborhood context

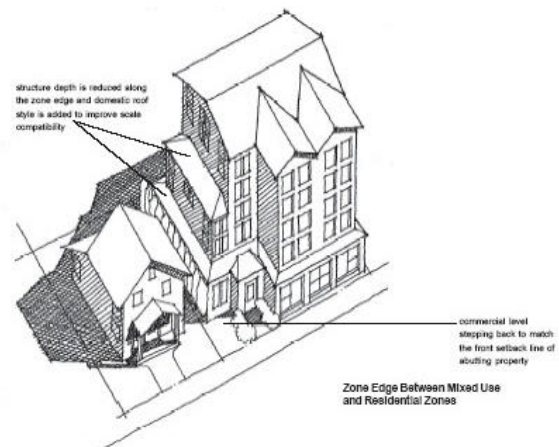
Most of the neighborhood plans requested the creation of building design guidelines so that new development fits in appropriately with the surrounding neighborhood context. This recognizes that the architectural design quality of new development has an

important role in shaping the quality of the urban environment.



### Zoning with appropriate transitions to lower-density uses

Many of the neighborhood plans identified an interest in maintaining or creating better transitions between the denser portions of the urban village or center and the nearby lower-density uses. This reflects an interest in compatibility of building bulk and scale between adjacent areas with different densities of development, which can help avoid visual and aesthetic impacts. But it also seeks to minimize the negative effects of other spillover impacts, such as parking and traffic congestion within lower-density areas near commercial centers.



## 2. Varying Interest in Zoning Issues

### The neighborhoods' commercial centers are at different stages

Each neighborhood has commercial centers at varying stages of evolution. These differences influenced neighborhood plan recommendations.

- In certain neighborhoods such as South Park, residents seek to nurture a small but evolving commercial district.
- In neighborhoods such as Bitter Lake, Aurora-Licton and Rainier Beach, the longtime strip commercial and utilitarian patterns of development create an environment that is hostile to neighbors seeking to walk or ride bikes to access goods and services. Each of these neighborhoods seeks to develop a pedestrian-oriented, neighborhood-serving commercial node in their commercial district.
- In neighborhoods such as Fremont and Pike/Pine, recent growth has transformed the neighborhood.
- In neighborhoods such as Capitol Hill, the University District and Northgate, there is concern that once-strong neighborhood business districts needs to be revitalized.

### Rezoning

The neighborhood plans expressed a wide variety of interests in zoning, some proposing very specific changes that were adopted with the plans, and some describing rezoning concepts that were meant to be reviewed in the future. For the most part, the neighborhood plans worked within the existing zoning system, meaning they discussed changes in terms of the prevailing commercial and residential zone categories, such as Neighborhood Commercial zones and Pedestrian designations.

The neighborhood plans with the most detailed and specific rezone requests included:

- University District
- North Rainier
- Columbia City
- Pike/Pine
- South Lake Union
- Central District
- MLK@Holly

Many of these rezones were adopted with the neighborhood plan, or soon after plan adoption.

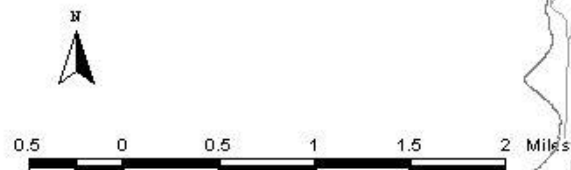
Several neighborhoods that requested future consideration of rezone concepts included:

- Rainier Beach (rezone pending)
- Lake City
- Aurora-Licton
- Capitol Hill
- Green Lake
- Roosevelt
- South Lake Union
- South Park
- Westwood/Highland Park

One example of a future intended rezone area is the Vitamilk Dairy site in the Green Lake business district. If this user decides to vacate the property, there will be a great opportunity for development supporting the urban village. However, this objective would likely be better served by different zoning than the current C1 zone.

## Areas where Neighborhood Plans provided direction regarding Single-purpose Residential Buildings in Commercial Areas

Single Purpose Residential  
■ Permitted Outright  
■ Prohibited



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## Single-Purpose Residential Development

Most neighborhoods expressed no preference for or against “single-purpose residential” (SPR) development. An SPR building is an apartment or condominium projects without commercial space at the ground floor built in a commercial district. Neighborhoods were given the opportunity through their neighborhood plans to identify whether they felt that ground floor residential uses could be appropriate in their commercial district.

Out of thirty-eight neighborhoods that developed plans, ten declared a preference for or against SPR projects. The six neighborhoods that supported SPR generally wished to provide greater flexibility to owners in the future development of property, so that some beneficial redevelopment or reuse could occur. Neighborhoods that opposed SPR wished to emphasize street-level commercial uses, or were concerned about the slightly higher densities that are permitted in SPR when they are inside an urban village.



19<sup>th</sup> Avenue lofts, a single-purpose residential building built in the NC/R zone in Madison-Miller

Neighborhoods that support SPR development in their plans include:

- University District
- West Seattle Junction
- Roosevelt
- Rainier Beach
- Columbia City
- Madison-Miller

Neighborhoods that prohibit SPR development in their plans include:

- Wallingford
- South Lake Union
- Lake City
- Bitter Lake

These preferences are reflected by a series of maps in the commercial section of the Land Use Code.

The Neighborhood Commercial/Residential designation was created in order to provide additional opportunities for residential-only buildings in commercial areas, where flexibility to allow ground floor residential spaces is desired. The designations allows for residential-only projects and shorter first floors for ground floor residential spaces. The NC/R designation can only be applied to NC2 and NC3 zones within urban villages through a neighborhood plan. It has been used in five neighborhoods:

- Columbia City
- North Beacon Hill
- Madison-Miller
- 23<sup>rd</sup> and Jackson-Union and
- MLK@Holly St.

### 3. Summary of Business District-Related Ideas in Neighborhood Plans

The following table summarizes the primary urban planning and zoning-related themes emphasized in neighborhood plans. There is some overlap, but the shades of differences reflect subtle differences in the plans. For example, some neighborhood plans express greatest interest in aesthetic and pedestrian-

related improvements, while others are more interested in economic revitalization of business districts. The table generalizes the plans' main emphases, for more information about specific recommendations, see Appendix 1.

	Business/ economic Revitalization	Zoning to aid redevelopment	Urban design, streetscape/ pedestrian improvements	Building design, development standards	Other Land Use Code topics	Transitions between uses	Parking	Housing	Station area planning
<b>URBAN CENTERS</b>									
1 <sup>st</sup> Hill/Capitol Hill									
Capitol Hill	•	•	•	•	•			•	•
First Hill	•	•	•	•					•
Pike/Pine		•		•	•		•	•	
See also Central									
Northgate	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Uptown			•	•					
University	•	•	•	•		•			
<b>HUB URBAN VILLAGES</b>									
Bitter Lake			•	•					
Ballard			•	•					
Fremont			•	•				•	
Lake City	•	•	•	•				•	
North Rainier	•	•	•	•				•	•
South Lake Union	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
W. Seattle Junction	•		•	•					

	Business/ economic Revitalization	Zoning to aid redevelopment	Urban design, streetscape/ pedestrian improvements	Building design, development standards	Other Land Use Code topics	Transitions between uses	Parking	Housing	Station area planning
<b>RESIDENTIAL URBAN VILLAGES</b>									
Admiral			•		•	•	•		
Aurora-Licton	•	•	•	•		•			
Central	•	•	•	•				•	
Columbia City	•	•	•	•				•	•
Crown Hill			•	•					
Eastlake			•	•		•		•	
Green Lake	•	•	•	•	•				
Greenwood/Phinney	•	•	•	•			•		
MLK@Holly	•	•	•						•
Morgan Junction				•	•		•		
North Beacon Hill	•	•	•	•					
Queen Anne			•	•					
Rainier Beach	•	•	•	•				•	•
Roosevelt		•	•	•		•			•
South Park	•	•	•		•				
Wallingford	•		•	•			•		
Westwood/Highland Park	•		•	•				•	
<b>OTHER AREAS</b>									
Delridge		•		•					
Georgetown			•		•				



## II. Recent Development in Neighborhood Business Districts

### A. Introduction

Between 1995 and 2002, Seattle experienced a boom in development. Demand for both housing and commercial space grew along with high tech businesses and the number of national and international publications extolling Seattle's character. Downtown Seattle was the primary recipient of that growth, as the heart of the city grew by over 4,500 households and 30,000 jobs. Other areas that saw growth include major institutions (hospitals and universities) and industrial areas. However, much of the City's growth also occurred in its neighborhood business districts, outside of Downtown (the neighborhood commercial and general commercial zones.) These areas accommodated almost 5,000 new housing units or 25% of the City's growth. These areas, which encompass only 8% of the City's land area, also accommodated 28% of the City's job growth (over 20,000 jobs) between 1995 and 2001.

During this period, over six million square feet of commercial space was built in the City's neighborhood business districts, much of it in large office and hotel projects in the neighborhoods surrounding downtown. Projects in neighborhood business districts vary widely, ranging from 475 square foot espresso stands to the 300,000 square foot Northgate North project.

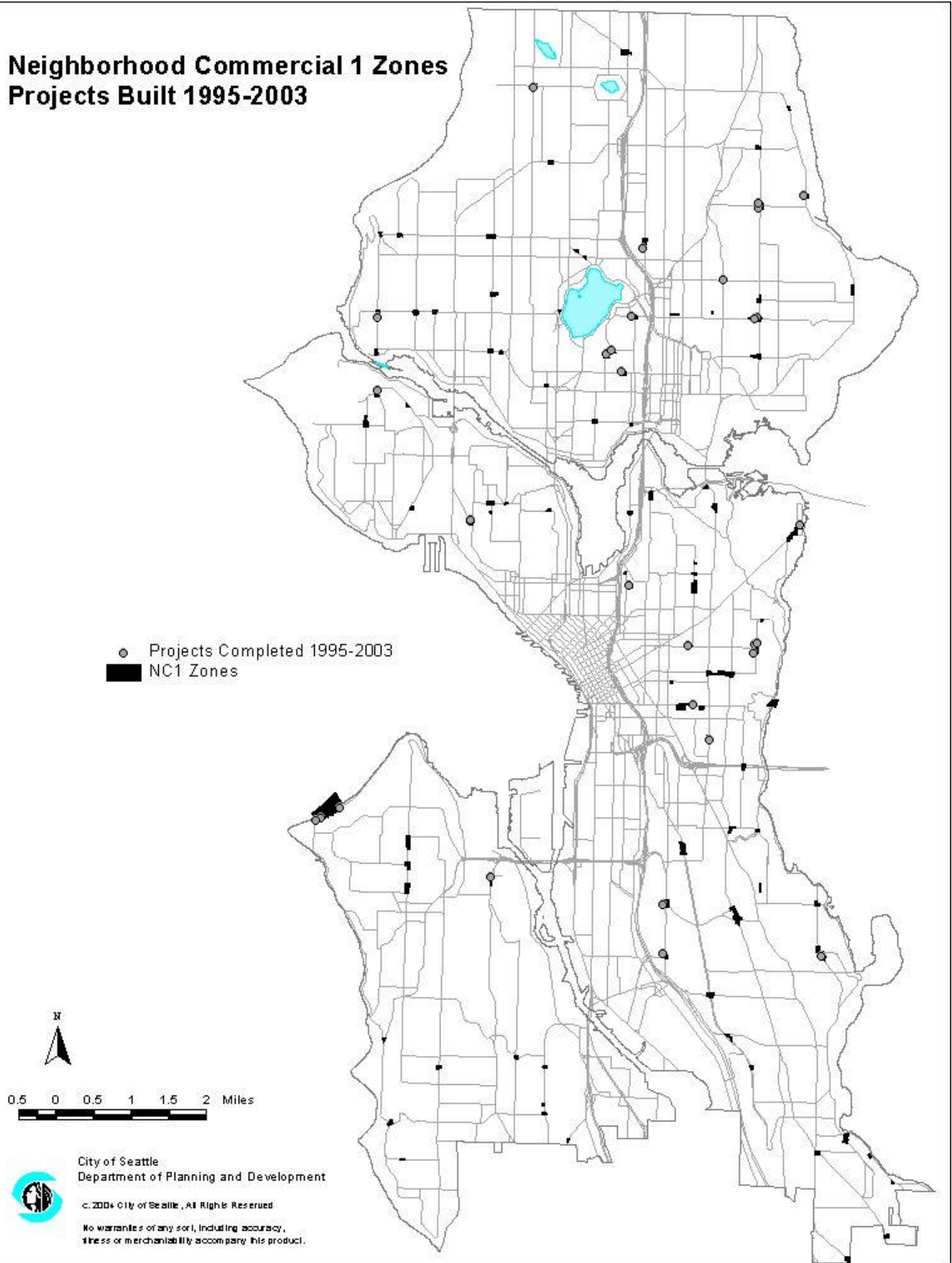
In the future, growth is likely to continue to be concentrated in the City's commercial zones. Approximately half of the City's capacity for new job growth is on commercially-zoned sites, and forty percent of new residential units could be located in the city's neighborhood business districts.

This section provides a snapshot of development over the last ten years in Seattle's neighborhood business districts by zoning category.



Construction of a mixed-use project in the Uptown Urban Center (NC3-40)

## Neighborhood Commercial 1 Zones Projects Built 1995-2003



## B. Neighborhood Commercial 1

The Neighborhood Commercial 1 zone is the least intensive of the City's commercial zones. They are generally small corner commercial districts scattered through the City's residential neighborhoods, mostly outside of urban villages. There are approximately 136 acres of NC1 zoned parcels in Seattle, over half of which have 30 foot height limits, the rest of which are zoned with 40 foot height limits.

### New Construction

Between 1995 and 2002, 31 projects were built in the NC1 zone. These projects were built on 6.7 acres, approximately 5% of all of the parcel area zoned NC1. Most of these projects were mixed-use projects with a combination of residential and commercial uses. The one single-purpose residential structure that was built was a single-family house on a lot with split commercial and multifamily zoning. Commercial projects ranged from strip retail centers to three-story office buildings. Mixed-use buildings range in size from one unit above a store to the Bowling Green, a 38 unit mixed-use building, with a range of retail spaces.

### Employment

In 2001, there were approximately 4,750 covered jobs<sup>1</sup> located in NC1 zones, employed by 466 employers (an average of

10 employees per employer). Not surprisingly in a zone that is intended to provide retail goods and services to surrounding neighborhoods, retail and service employment accounted for most of the employment in the NC1 zone. Eating and drinking establishments and health services were the most prevalent category of businesses. The Health Services industry has been the fastest growing employment sector in NC1 areas.

<sup>1</sup> Covered jobs refer to jobs covered by the state unemployment insurance program. This excludes a number of jobs, such as military and temporary employment. It also excludes the owners of businesses, which may result in an undercount of employment in areas with a lot of small businesses. This data, provided by the Washington State Employment Security Department and the Puget Sound Regional Council is the best available information on employment in Seattle.

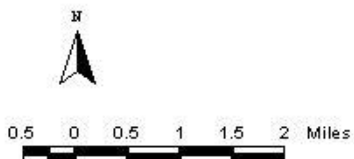
Projects built in Neighborhood Commercial 1 zones 1995-2003

	Commercial-Only	Mixed-Use	Residential-Only	All Projects
Number of Projects	5	25	1	31
Commercial Square Feet	47,571	111,905	0	159,476
Residential Units	0	394	1	395
Parcel Area	41,664	247,987	3,003	292,654
Building Density (Gross FAR)	1.38	2.27	0.43	2.12
Residential Density (SF/Unit)	0	630	3,003	741



## Neighborhood Commercial 2 Zones Projects Built 1995-2003

- ▣ Projects Completed 1995-2003
- NC2 Zones



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## C. *Neighborhood Commercial 2*

Neighborhood Commercial 2 zones provide a range of needed goods and services to surrounding neighborhoods, and are generally larger than NC1 zoned areas. NC2 zones can be found throughout the City, often as the core business district in residential urban villages. There are approximately 487 acres of parcels zoned NC2, with 75% of those areas zoned with 40 foot height limits, and the rest split between 30 foot and 65 foot height limits.

### **New Construction**

Between 1995 and 2002, 90 projects were built in the NC2 zone, on 34 acres or 7% of the total parcel area in the zone. Most of these projects were mixed-use buildings. The five single-purpose residential structures that were built included townhouses and small condominium projects. Commercial projects ranged from a 1,200 square foot plumber's shop to a 50,000 square foot grocery store. The least dense new projects were convenience stores and fast-food restaurants, which consumed one-tenth of their lot area. The densest was a four-story mini-warehouse. Mixed-use buildings range in size from one unit above a small ground floor commercial space to the 70-unit Towers on Greenwood, at the heart of the Greenwood Urban Village.

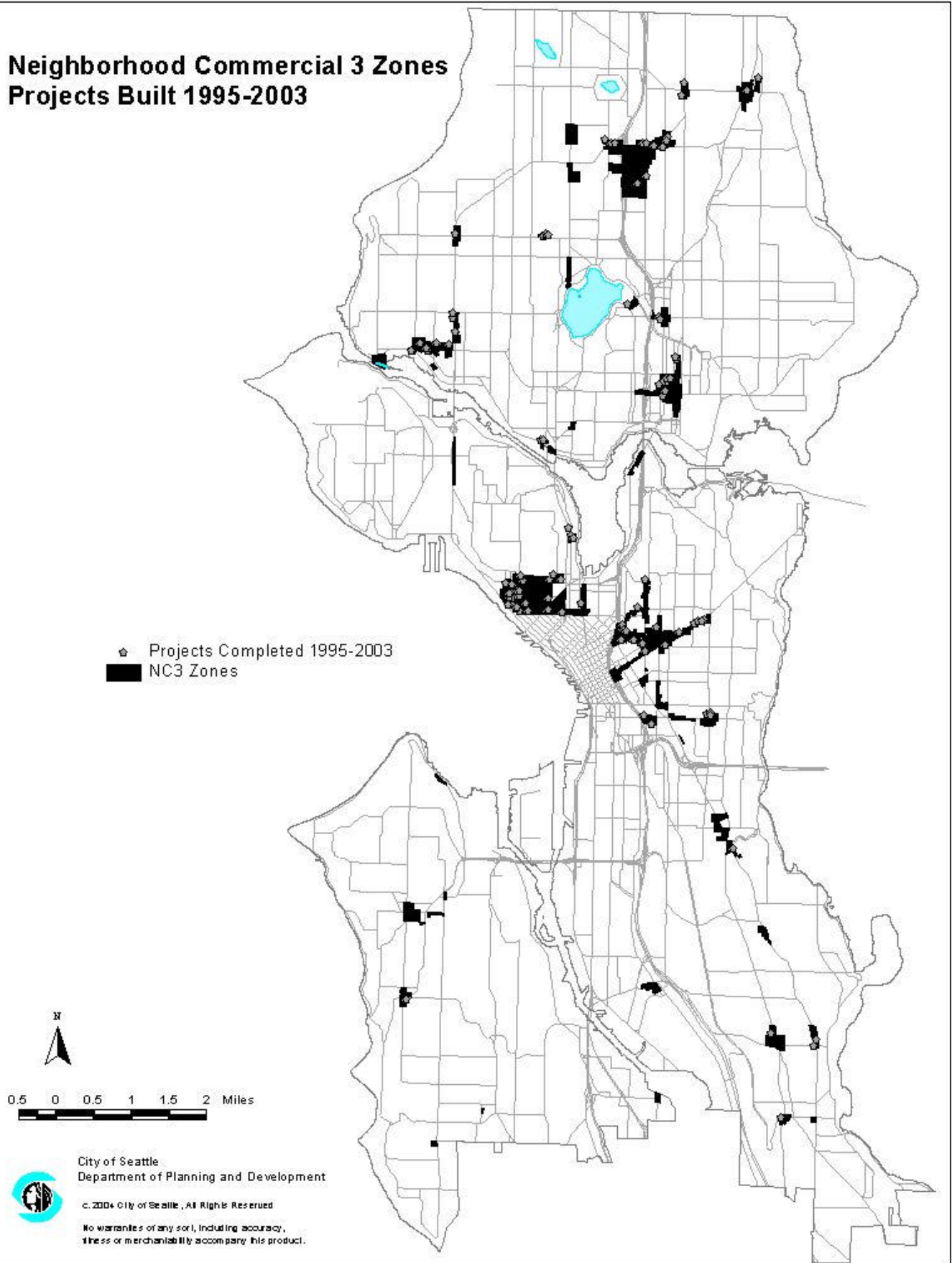
### **Employment**

In 2001, there were approximately 20,500 covered jobs located in the NC2 zones, employed by 1,718 employers (an average of 12 employees per employer). As with the NC1 zone, retail and service employment accounted for most of the employment in the NC2 zone. Similarly, eating and drinking establishments and health services were the most prevalent business categories, and saw the most growth in employment between 1995 and 2002.

Projects built in Neighborhood Commercial 2 zones 1995-2003

	Commercial-Only	Mixed-Use	Residential-Only	All Projects
Number of Projects	32	55	2	89
Commercial Square Feet	437,430	341,004	0	778,434
Residential Units	0	1,293	3	1,296
Parcel Area	812,630	662,702	4,976	1,480,308
Building Density (Gross FAR)	0.60	2.99	1.40	1.67
Residential Density (SF/Unit)	0	513	2,333	1,142

## Neighborhood Commercial 3 Zones Projects Built 1995-2003



## D. Neighborhood Commercial 3

Neighborhood Commercial 3 zones provide a range of needed goods and services to a citywide clientele. They are generally found at the heart of the densest commercial areas in the City, areas like Broadway, the University District and Uptown Queen Anne all have concentrations of NC3 zoning. There are approximately 840 acres of parcels zoned NC3, with 40% of NC3 areas zoned with 65 foot height limits, and the rest primarily split between 40 foot and 85 foot height limits. The NC3 zone is the only pedestrian-oriented commercial zone with areas zoned over 85 feet; approximately 35 acres are zoned for 125 or 160 foot buildings.

### New Construction

Between 1995 and 2002, 99 projects were built in the NC3 zone. These projects were built on 80.3 acres, or 9.6% of NC3-zoned land. Of these projects, fifty were commercial-only projects, the rest contained residential units. The seven residential-only projects that were built were mostly townhouse projects, and included the Low Income Housing Institute's Denise Hunt Townhomes in Greenwood. The smallest and largest commercial projects were in Northgate and ranged from a 1,200 square foot service station on Northgate Way to the Northgate North (big box) retail project,

which includes over 350,000 square feet of retail space. The least dense new projects were gas stations. The densest new buildings were office buildings (Fisher Plaza buildings near Seattle Center and the 45<sup>th</sup> Street Plaza building in the University District) and hotels (The Mediterranean Inn in Uptown and the Silver Cloud Inn on Broadway). Unlike in the lower-intensity commercial zones, the densest buildings built in the NC3 zone were commercial-only projects. Mixed-use buildings range in size from a single small unit over a retail space to the 250-unit grocery store/residential project currently under construction at 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave. and Madison St.

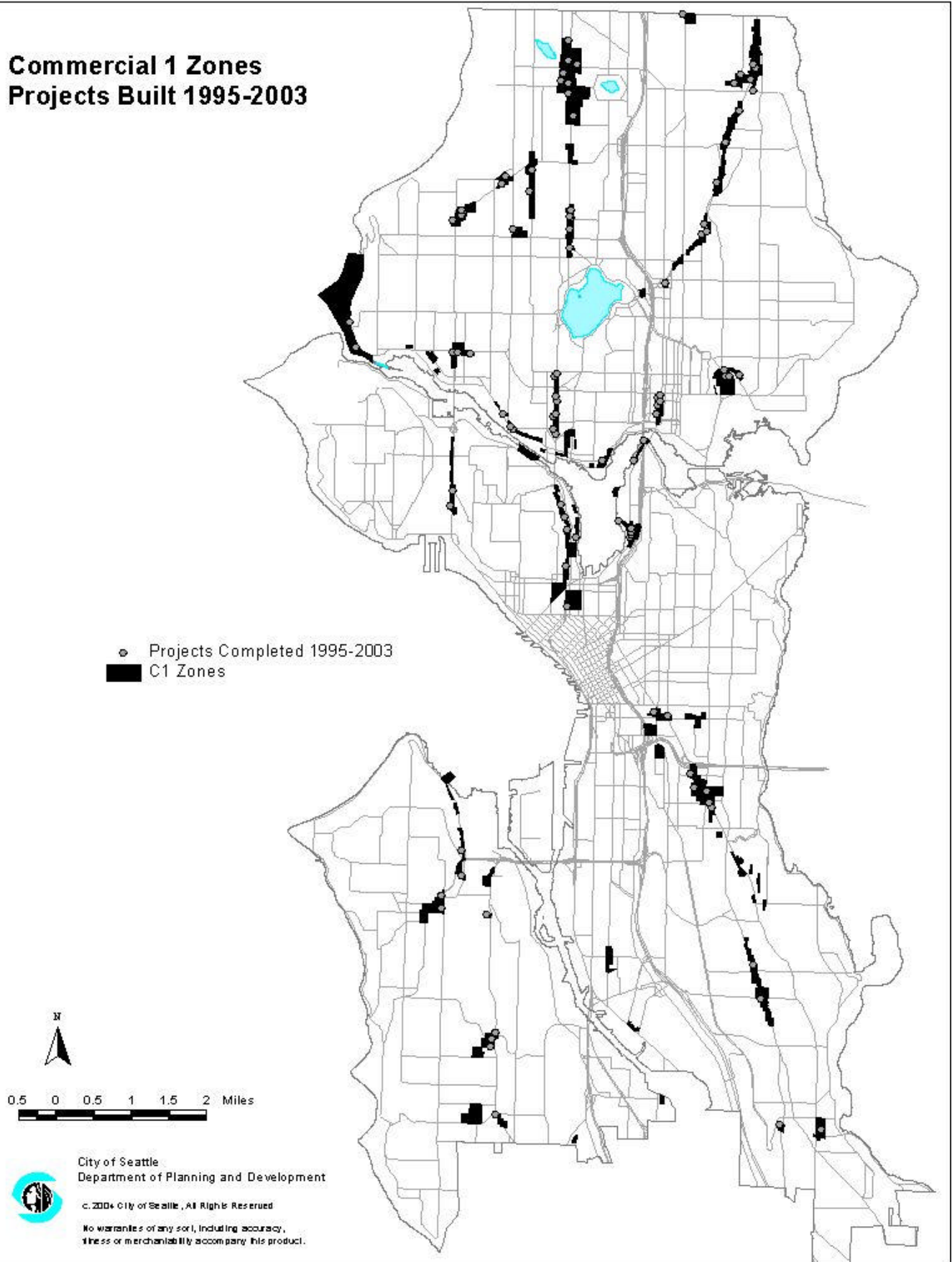
### Employment

In 2001, there were approximately 54,000 covered jobs located in the NC3 zones, employed by 2,725 employers (an average of 20 employees per employer). Service employment accounted for half of the employment in the NC3 zone. After eating and drinking establishments, insurance carriers and business services establishments contained the highest number of jobs in the NC3 zones. As opposed to the NC1 and 2 zones, NC3-zoned areas have lost health services employment. Insurance and miscellaneous retail employment saw the biggest gains between 1995 and 2001.

Projects built in Neighborhood Commercial 3 zones 1995-2003

	Commercial-Only	Mixed-Use	Residential-Only	All Projects
Number of Projects	60	32	7	99
Commercial Square Feet	2,055,330	250,699	0	2,306,029
Residential Units	0	1,398	167	1,565
Parcel Area	2,768,611	638,721	91,083	3,498,415
Building Density (Gross FAR)	0.95	3.20	1.68	1.38
Residential Density (SF/Unit)	0	457	687	2,235

## Commercial 1 Zones Projects Built 1995-2003



## E. Commercial 1

Commercial 1 zones are generally auto-oriented retail business districts. They provide retail goods and services to a broad community, and are found in areas like University Village and at the west end of the West Seattle bridge. They are often at the center of hub urban villages, areas where increases in both jobs and housing are desired. There are approximately 988 acres of parcels zoned C1. 53% of C1 areas have 40 foot height limits, 42% have 65-foot height limits, and the rest are primarily split between 30 foot and 85 foot height limits. The Pacific Medical Center/Amazon building at the north end of Beacon Hill is zoned Commercial 1 with heights up to 160 feet.

### New Construction

Between 1995 and 2002, 106 projects were built in the C1 zone. These projects were built on 8 percent of C1-zoned land, or 81 acres. Of these projects, 63 were commercial-only or institutional projects, the rest contained residential units. The 13 single-purpose residential structures that were built ranged from a townhouse project in Crown Hill to large apartment buildings above west Lake Union, and a retirement facility in West Seattle. Commercial-only projects ranged from a small workshop on north Greenwood Avenue (960 square feet) to the most recent additions to University Village (over 350,000 square feet, including an 800 stall garage). The least dense new

projects included the Krispy Kreme store on Aurora, with a Floor Area Ratio of .06. The densest new commercial buildings were office buildings along Westlake Avenue and Roosevelt Way, both of which are over 6 FAR, or 100 times as dense as the least dense projects. Mixed-use buildings range in size from a veterinary hospital with a caretaker's apartment, to the Solara project in Lake City, a 4 FAR, 240 unit mixed-use building.

### Employment

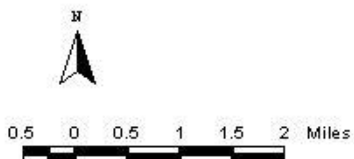
In 2001, there were approximately 34,000 covered jobs located in the C1 zones, employed by 1,488 employers (an average of 23 employees per employer). As with all of the commercial zones, service and retail are the largest sectors in the C1 zones. However, in C1 zones, miscellaneous retail employment is the top employment category. Miscellaneous retail includes businesses such as drug and liquor stores, florists, and "non-store retailers," which includes internet retailers. This industry saw the biggest gains in employment between 1995 and 2001. Business services is the second largest employment category, and saw the second largest amount of growth between 1995 and 2001.

Projects built in Commercial 1 zones 1995-2003

	Commercial-Only	Mixed-Use	Residential-Only	All Projects
Number of Projects	63	30	13	106
Commercial Square Feet	2,016,600	250,700	0	2,267,300
Residential Units	0	1,400	167	1,567
Parcel Area	2,783,000	660,600	91,000	3,534,600
Building Density (Gross FAR)	1.3	3.1	1.5	1.6
Residential Density (SF/Unit)	0	475	545	2,256

## Commercial 2 Zones Projects Built 1995-2003

- Projects Completed 1995-2003
- C2 Zones



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## **F. Commercial 2**

Commercial 2 zones provide the widest range of commercial activities serving a citywide function. They are intended to be automobile-oriented areas, which are generally inconsistent with residential and office uses. There are approximately 684 acres of parcels zoned C2, with 52% of C2 areas zoned with 40 foot height limits, 44% with 65 foot height limits, and the rest primarily split between 30 foot and 85 foot height limits.

### **New Construction**

Between 1995 and 2002, 27 projects were built in the C2 zone on 31 acres of land, or 3.1% of all commercially-zoned land. Of these projects, 21 were commercial-only projects, the rest were a mix of residential and commercial uses. The smallest commercial project was an 1800 square foot warehouse building in the Interbay area. The largest are office buildings in South Lake Union/west Lake Union, one of which has a gross floor area of over 380,000 square feet. These projects, built on steep hillsides in 65 foot commercial areas, achieve 7 FAR. The least dense new project was a service garage on Rainier Avenue S. Mixed-use buildings range in size from 2 to 60 units with 1,500 to 5,000 square feet of commercial space.

### **Employment**

In 2001, there were approximately 18,000 covered jobs located in the C2 zones, employed by 675 employers (an average of 27 employees per employer). Engineering, accounting and management employment accounted for one out of every six jobs, and over two thirds of the new jobs added between 1995 and 2001. This industry group includes many of the biotech job categories.

Projects built in Commercial 2 zones 1995-2003

	Commercial-Only	Mixed-Use	Residential-Only	All Projects
Number of Projects	21	6	0	27
Commercial Square Feet	2,062,786	26,620	0	2,089,406
Residential Units	0	159	0	159
Parcel Area	1,184,539	168,822	0	1,353,361
Building Density (Gross FAR)	0.8	2.2	0	2.2
Residential Density (SF/Unit)	0	1,062	0	8,512

## G. Vacancies in Seattle's Business Districts

Seattle's neighborhood business districts provide a wide range of environments, spaces and customer bases for commercial endeavors. Allowing for some vacancy in these areas is important. Without vacancies, there are no opportunities for new businesses to serve emerging markets, or serve existing markets better. However, large amounts of vacancies hurt a business district by creating gaps in the street front, reduce the impetus for property owners to invest in their property, and discourage new businesses.

A general rule of thumb is that a vacancy rate between 3 and 7 percent provides a healthy balance between opportunities for new businesses and keeping commercial spaces occupied. However, because neighborhood business districts often have unique spaces and unique markets, business districts that have a slightly higher vacancy rate, may still be healthy.

A survey of conditions in six neighborhood business districts in the summer of 2004 indicated that in some neighborhoods, street level vacancies are higher than would be optimal. Vacancy rates for storefronts ranged from a low of 6% in Admiral and 8% in Greenwood/Phinney Ridge business district to a high of 15% in Lake City and Columbia City. The other two business districts, East Madison and Eastlake, had vacancy rates of 12% and 13%, respectively.

The vacancy rate for office space has been higher than the rate for retail space across the region since 2001.<sup>1</sup> Currently, the vacancy rate in Seattle's neighborhood business districts is above 13.3%, lower than the regional 15.3% rate, and slightly lower



than the downtown rate of 13.5. Office vacancies are lower north of the Ship Canal, with a rate of 8.75%. South of the Ship Canal, the rate is 17.5%. This comparatively high rate reflects some new buildings that have been completed since the downturn in the local office market began in 2001.

In addition to vacancies within existing buildings, vacant and underutilized lots provide space for businesses to grow. Seattle has approximately 2,800 commercially-zoned parcels that are currently vacant, have very small structures compared to what could be built under current zoning, or are old and poorly maintained. These sites could accommodate 56 million square feet of commercial space (enough space for another 187,000 jobs), and 51,000 housing units. This capacity is split fairly evenly between auto-oriented and pedestrian-oriented areas, with just over half of potential jobs and 55% of units possible within the pedestrian-oriented commercial zones. These sites are spread throughout the city.

<sup>1</sup> CBRE Puget Sound Market Retail and Office Market Index Briefs, Q4 2003

### III. The Commercial Land Use Code

Seattle's Land Use Code implements the Comprehensive Plan's policies through its regulations. These regulations contain the City's standards for development, and for use and reuse of property. The Code's standards generally seek to ensure the overall compatibility of uses and structures with the surrounding community. The Code does this by preventing negative impacts that can be caused by some land uses or activities locating near each other (heavy industry near residential uses, for example ) and by encouraging development types and uses that support each other.

In order to foster healthy and compatible business districts, the Commercial Land Use Code (SMC 23.47) provides detailed regulations that address when and how certain uses are permissible, the physical features of development (size, density, landscaping, screening, parking, etc.), and how to control potential impacts of commercial activities, such as noise and odor. The following discussion summarizes key elements of Seattle's existing land use code.

#### A. Uses

The Land Use Code's commercial use standards (beginning with SMC 23.47.004 and .006) aim to ensure compatibility among uses by limiting intensive uses in more sensitive commercial zones and allowing the greatest variety and intensity of uses in the least sensitive zones. This is a hierarchical system that prioritizes the greatest overall protection for the pedestrian-oriented NC1 and NC2 zones, and the least restrictive use standards for the automobile-oriented C1 and C2 zones.

Uses are regulated in a number of different ways.

- ▶ A chart of uses shows which uses are permitted in a zone, and which uses are prohibited.
- ▶ A number of uses are identified as conditional uses in one or more zones. These uses are reviewed on a case-by-case basis against defined criteria.
- ▶ Some uses are subject to maximum size of use limits. They are permitted, but only up to a certain size.
- ▶ Residential uses are a special case in commercial areas, they are generally permitted in buildings that contain a mix of commercial and residential uses, but residential-only buildings are subject to review to ensure that they are appropriate to the location.
- ▶ Some residential buildings are subject to density limits, which limit the number of units that can be built on a site, based on the site's size.
- ▶ The City has special requirements for street level uses in particular areas. These requirements are intended to ensure a lively pedestrian streetscape.

## 1. Use Chart

Along with building types, the mix of uses defines an area. Use requirements are central to the differences among the City's commercial zones.

In order to show where particular uses are appropriate, the Commercial Land Use Code uses a chart that shows approximately 115 types of land uses across five zone categories. The chart includes five different categories of permission: permitted outright; prohibited; permitted under specified conditions; permitted through City Council review; and permitted only in shoreline areas. In addition, sometimes it identifies a combination of two of those levels of permission, for example permitted outright up to a certain size limit, with the possibility of a conditional use permit above that size. A wide variety of land use sub-categories are described under larger categories such as retail sales and service, entertainment and transportation facilities. For example, "eating and drinking establishments" is nested under "Retail Sales and Services" and itself contains three subcategories.

It is relatively easy to understand the table but the listing of so many uses, several with the same permissibility status, extends the table across 4½ pages. In addition, fifteen footnotes provide both additional information and complexity.

Some categories in the chart provide useful distinctions, for example many of the listed automobile-related services are treated distinctly depending on the zone. On the other hand, all twelve of the institutional uses listed are permitted in all commercial zones, with no specific distinctions between the zones.

### Uses define differences among zones

**NC1 and NC2** zones are typically smaller commercial districts surrounded by residential areas. They sometimes provide a transition from more intensive commercial/mixed-use areas to less intensive residential areas. This means that the NC1 and NC2 zones are generally next to lower density residential areas, which can be sensitive to the byproducts of commercial use, such as noise, odor and traffic. Intensive commercial or industrial uses are prohibited in these areas. However, the use standards also implicitly recognize that a variety of retail/service commercial uses are appropriate close to residential areas to serve residents and support neighborhood vitality.

**Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC3)** zones allow a somewhat wider variety of uses than the NC1 and NC2 zones. For example, the NC3 zone allows warehouses, wholesale showrooms, sales/service/rental of commercial equipment and construction materials, and conditionally allows park & ride lots. Also, several uses in the NC3 zone are permitted to be larger in size than allowed in NC1 and NC2 zones. The NC3 zones are found in the larger pedestrian districts.

The **C1 and C2 zones** are intended to accommodate a wide variety of general commercial uses. The C2 zone allows the most intensive types of uses allowed outside of Industrial zones, such as general manufacturing, cargo terminals and kennels. The C2 zone is considered suitable for locations near industrial areas and along major arterials. The C1 zone allows fewer of the most intensive commercial uses, and is considered most suitable for automobile-oriented retail/service commercial uses located along busy arterials.

## 2. Conditional uses

The commercial use standards devote several pages of text to regulations for certain types of uses, such as public facilities, cemeteries, fast food restaurants, taverns, park & ride lots, helicopter landing facilities, work release centers, and “single-purpose residential” structures in certain zones. The code provides approval criteria for several conditional uses.

These conditional use requirements are three pages long and have been amended over once a year. As these criteria have evolved, the intent has been to be specific enough to evaluate applications for these uses.

Depending on the type of use, the conditions can become very specific. For example, the siting of work-release centers is in part based on the policies of the center including “...methods of checking the records of persons sponsoring outings for work-release residents...”

## 3. Maximum size of nonresidential uses

In addition to providing direction regarding which uses are appropriate in a particular type of business district, the code places limits on the size of specific uses in different areas. Section 23.47.010 of the commercial code lists maximum size of non-residential uses per individual business establishments or lots. Sizes of uses were initially limited in order to limit the amount of traffic that would be attracted to smaller commercial districts. Table III-2 contains the current limits.

There are two ways in which buildings in these zones can exceed size limits. First, the limits apply only to individual business establishments. This means that a single structure may be bigger if there are multiple businesses operating within it. For example, the Lakeside Plaza building at the north end of Green Lake contains a mix of restaurant, retail and office businesses, which combine to equal 34,000 square feet, more than the

**Table III-1**  
**Conditional Uses by Commercial Zone**

Conditional Uses	Zones in which the Use is Conditional				
	NC1	NC2	NC3	C1	C2
Medical Services near medical Major Institution	•	•	•	•	•
Restaurants with drive-in lanes			•		
Drinking Establishments	•	•			
Principal Use Parking (temporary)	•	•	•	•	•
Transit Vehicle Base				•	•
Helistops			•	•	•
Major Communication Utility				•	•
Work-Release Center	•	•	•	•	•
Single-Purpose Residential buildings	•	•	•	•	•
Any residential use (except Nursing Homes and caretaker's quarters)					•
Mobile Home Park					•
Park and Ride Lots					•

**Table III-2  
Maximum Size Limits (sq. ft) for Nonresidential Uses**

Nonresidential Uses Subject to Maximum Size Limit	Zone				
	NC1	NC2	NC3	C1	C2
Nonresidential uses including institutions and public facilities unless otherwise specified	4,000	15,000	None	None	None
Medical services	10,000	15,000	None	None	None
Multi-purpose convenience store	10,000	50,000	None	None	None
Food processing and craft work	4,000	5,000	10,000	None	None
Light manufacturing	X	5,000	10,000	None	None
Fuel sales	4,000	8,000	None	None	None
Sales, service and rental of commercial equipment and construction materials Passenger terminals	N/A	N/A	25,000	None	None
Indoor participant sports and recreation	4,000	15,000	25,000	None	None
General manufacturing	N/A	N/A	N/A	15,000	None
Wholesale showroom warehouse	N/A	N/A	15,000	25,000	None
Mini-warehouses	N/A	N/A	15,000	40,000	None

15,000 square feet permitted for nonresidential uses in an NC2 zone.

Second, existing businesses are permitted to expand, and in most cases to double in size.

A review of more than 300 commercial and mixed-use development proposals over the past several years generally indicates that the limit most frequently “exceeded” was the 4,000 square foot limit in NC1 zones (10 of 37 projects in NC1 zones). However, since these projects were either to allow an existing business establishment to expand or to permit a building which would contain a number of distinct business establishments, none of the proposals inappropriately exceeded the limit for a particular use.

In NC2 zones, approximately 13 of 102 projects involved buildings that exceeded the soft 15,000 square foot limit. However, in every case, the proposal was allowed because it was either the expansion of an existing business or the development of multiple individual business establishments each of which was smaller than the size limit.

For the other size limits expressed for specific types of commercial uses, no proposals exceeded the limits and there was no pattern that suggested the limits are too low. Even where there was no maximum size limit, the projects did not show a pattern of excessive size.

Approximately ten projects have been built in the NC1 zone with more than 4,000 square feet of commercial space. Some of these projects have split their commercial area into small, distinct commercial spaces that are each under 4,000 square feet. For example, the new Bowling Green mixed-use project in Madrona contains 3,900 square feet of office space, 1,500 square feet of retail space, 500 square feet of restaurant space and a 500 square foot specialty food store. Because developers can break their buildings into a number of different commercial uses, each of which fall under the threshold, it is not clear that the limits provide any significant impediment to the size of a building, the concentration of commercial space in a neighborhood, or the traffic impacts of businesses on the



surrounding neighborhood. Five smaller popular businesses may attract more traffic than one large business.

In C1 and C2 zones, there is also a 35,000 square foot limitation on office uses. These limits are in place to limit pedestrian activity in an auto-oriented zone. However, if an office building meets specific standards from the pedestrian-oriented zones, the limits do not apply. The standards apply to outdoor storage, screening, blank facades, drive-in lanes and location of parking.

Seven projects were built in the C zones that exceeded those limits. These projects tended to contain between 80,000 and 125,000 square feet of office space, two to three and a half times the limit. However, since these proposals met development standards or served multiple business establishments, none inappropriately exceeded the size limits. Most of these large projects have been built in center city neighborhoods surrounding Downtown Seattle.

#### **4. Residential Uses in Commercial Areas**

Residential uses play a special role in commercial areas. In pedestrian-oriented areas residents are likely to patronize their neighborhood businesses. The resulting mix of uses can be mutually supportive, with residents patronizing neighborhood businesses and businesses providing needed goods, services and sometimes jobs for the residents. On the other hand, limits on residential uses have been considered appropriate in auto-oriented zones, where more intensive commercial and light industrial uses could create negative impacts on residents, including traffic, odors and noise. In these auto-oriented areas the street environment can conflict with pedestrian activity, meaning that residents in these areas are more likely to drive to make their trips than are residents in other areas.

Seattle's regulations split residential structures in commercial areas into two categories: mixed-use and single-purpose residential.

- ▶ "Mixed-use development" contain a combination of residential and non-residential uses, with most of the street front dedicated to non-residential uses. These buildings are permitted in most commercial zones. They are conditional uses in the C2 zone.
- ▶ "Single-purpose residential structures" contain no street level commercial spaces – in multifamily zones they would be called multifamily buildings. For a number of reasons, these projects are subject to more restrictions on their location in commercial areas than are mixed-use projects.

**a) Locations for Residential Uses**

Mixed-use structures, because they provide ground floor retail space, and thus continue to provide a commercial environment even though they can be filled with predominantly residential uses. By permitting them in commercial areas, residents are able to live close to jobs, goods and services and businesses receive the benefit of more potential customers. They are permitted in most commercial zones, but in the most intensive auto-oriented zone (C2), any residential use is only allowed if the following conditions can be met:

- (1) Availability of Suitable Land for C2 Activities. Residential uses shall generally be discouraged in areas which have limited vacant land and where, due to terrain and large parcel size, land is particularly suitable for commercial rather than residential development.
- (2) Relationship to Transportation Systems. Residential uses shall generally be discouraged in areas with direct access to major transportation systems such as freeways, state routes and freight rail lines.
- (3) Compatibility With Surrounding Areas. Residential uses shall not be allowed in close proximity to industrial areas and/or in areas where nonresidential uses may create a nuisance or adversely affect the desirability of the area for living purposes.

Single purpose residential structures are more strictly regulated. In most areas, they are permitted only when:

- a. Due to location or parcel size, the proposed site is not suited for commercial development; or

- b. There is substantial excess supply of land available for commercial use near the proposed site, as shown by conditions like a lack of commercial activity in existing commercial structures for a sustained period, commercial structures in disrepair, and vacant or underused commercially zoned land; provided that single-purpose residential development cannot interrupt “established commercial street front[s].”

Single Purpose Residential structures are prohibited in areas with height limits of 85 feet or higher, in order to maintain street level commercial activity and pedestrian interest in the densest commercial areas.

Neighborhoods were given the opportunity to map areas where single-purpose residential buildings should be permitted outright or prohibited. Several neighborhoods that supported SPR wished to provide greater flexibility to owners in the future development of property, so that some beneficial redevelopment or reuse could occur. Neighborhoods that opposed SPR wished to maintain street-level commercial use requirements.

In areas mapped with the Pedestrian 1 and 2 designations (P1 and P2), single-purpose residential structures are prohibited. It is intended in these areas to create or enhance pedestrian-oriented shopping districts. Residential uses, especially as they have been built in the past, could create breaks in the retail character of the street, discouraging customers from walking from shop to shop.

Areas mapped with the Neighborhood Commercial/Residential designation, on the other hand, are intended to promote residential development within a commercial area. The R designation has

only been used in response to neighborhood plans, it allows single purpose residential uses outright, and limits the amount of commercial space that can be built in an area.

If an area isn't mapped with a residential or pedestrian designation, and a neighborhood plan didn't map areas to permit or prohibit an area as appropriate or inappropriate for single-purpose residential uses, they are treated as conditional uses.<sup>1</sup>

There have been very few single-purpose residential structures built in the City's commercial zones over the last ten years – only 4% of all projects in commercial areas. Generally they have been located at the edges of commercial areas, in locations with low commercial visibility.

Among the largest projects have been condominiums along Harbor Avenue Southwest, at a fairly isolated location separated from a strong commercial environment; a multifamily building a half block off of Eastlake Avenue, at the south end of the Eastlake neighborhood; and a senior housing project on Greenwood Avenue N. at 96<sup>th</sup> Street, in an area with a mix of existing residential and commercial uses, and along North

85<sup>th</sup> Street in the Greenwood neighborhood, at the east end of the commercial district. The least dense projects include the few townhouse projects that have been built in commercial zones, including one at Holman Road and Mary Avenue NW in Crown Hill.

### b) Residential Density Limits

In addition to regulating the location of residential structures, Seattle regulates the number of units a residential building can contain. The number of units in a mixed-use structure is limited by building design constraints, like setbacks and height limits. On the other hand, many single-purpose residential buildings are subject to limits on the number of units permitted on their site. This does not influence the size of the project, only the number of units inside.

Residential density limits are determined by dividing the square feet of a lot by the number of units on site. For example, a 10-unit multifamily building on a 5,000 square foot lot would have a density of 500 sq. ft./unit (5,000/10 = 500). Density limits in commercial areas are set to encourage the

**Table III-3**  
**Density Limits for Single-Purpose Residential Structures in Commercial Zones**

Zone	Height Limit	Inside Urban Villages	Outside of urban villages
NC 1/2/3	30'	700 sq. ft./unit	800 sq. ft./unit
NC 1/2/3	40'	500 sq. ft./unit	600 sq. ft./unit
NC 1/2/3	65'	400 sq. ft./unit	600 sq. ft./unit
NC 1/2/3	Over 65'	Prohibited	Prohibited
NC/R	Any Height	None	Zone not allowed
C1/C2	Any Height	1,000 sq. ft./unit	1,000 sq. ft./unit
C1/C2 built to NC Standards	Any Height	See NC Standards	1,000 sq. ft./unit

<sup>1</sup> These conditions could merit some further review for their continued relevance. For example, a single-purpose residential structure is permitted in any commercial zone, if "...an application for a reservation of tax credit for 1988 and 1989 under the low-income tax credit program administered by the Washington State Housing Finance Commission was filed on or before March 15, 1988;..."

development of mixed-use projects within urban villages. Generally, mixed-use structures have no density limit, and single-purpose residential buildings can contain more units inside urban villages than outside of urban villages. This is intended to provide an incentive to build mixed-use

structures and implements a Comprehensive Plan policy that calls for concentrating development inside urban villages.

The incentive of allowing projects to have higher densities in mixed-use projects than in single-purpose residential projects, has succeeded in encouraging almost all residential development in commercial areas to include some commercial space. As mentioned above, there have been very few single-purpose residential projects built in commercial zones over the last ten years.

building. These projects are generally much less dense than most mixed-use projects in their zone category.

### c) Other Housing Types

In addition to two basic types of residential uses in Commercial zones, three other types of residential uses are built in Seattle. Each of these uses – home occupations, live-work units and assisted living facilities – combines businesses with residential uses in unique ways and is treated distinctly in the

**Table III-4**  
**Median Densities in Built Mixed-Use Projects**  
**(lot area in sq. ft. per unit)**

Zone	Height Limit	Inside Urban Villages		Outside of urban villages	
		Number of Units	Median Density	Number of Units	Median Density
NC 1/2/3, C1/2	30'	0	N/A	327	825
NC 1/2/3, C1/2	40'	1,553	500	726	550
NC 1/2/3, C1/2	65'	2,579	525	326	575
NC 1/2/3, C1/2	Over 65'	39	250	0	N/A

Most of those projects consisted of single-family homes or townhouse projects, many of them on sites that are split by two different zoning designations.

For mixed-use projects, which aren't subject to any limits on density, the median residential density is approximately the same as the maximum density permitted in single-purpose residential projects. This means that approximately half of mixed-use projects would be permitted under the density limits for single-purpose residential projects, and half would be denser than those limits.

However, these mixed-use numbers include some types of projects, such as senior housing, that would be exempt from those density limits, and are generally denser than other types of multifamily housing in commercial areas. At the same time, these mixed-use projects include some projects that appear to have one or two units added as accessory uses to a primarily commercial

code.

### Assisted Living Facilities

Assisted living facilities are multi-family buildings that provide their residents with assistance with the activities of daily living (eating, toileting, moving, and/or bathing) or whose residents have cognitive impairments but do not need skilled critical care. Because of the lower impacts that the residents of assisted living facilities have on their surrounding neighborhood, they are not subject to density or open space requirements. However, they are required to provide communal areas that equal 20% of the area of the units, instead of open space. They are also required to provide a kitchen on-site where food for the entire facility is prepared.

### Live-Work Units

Live work units are units that combine a business and living space within the same unit. They provide opportunities for small

business owners to live and work in the same space. Live-work units provide a transition between traditional mixed-use buildings and single purpose residential buildings.

When provided at street level in areas where single purpose residential structures are allowed as conditional uses, they can qualify a building as mixed-use and the conditional use requirements for a single-purpose residential building do not need to be met. In order to make sure that they provide an active street front, transparency and visibility into the front of the unit are required.

### **Home Occupations**

Home occupations are work places within a residential unit. They are permitted as a part of a residential use, and the code seeks to make them subservient to the residential character of the structure. The difference between live-work units and home occupations is that the primary use in a home occupation is the housing. In live-work units, housing and business have an equal weight and importance in the regulations. In order to ensure that the residential use remains the primary use on the site, the code states that home occupations:

- can't advertise their address;
- have stricter limits on their signs;
- can't make any exterior or interior alterations that wouldn't be normal in a residential unit;
- have limits on the number of vehicles associated with the business;
- can't operate out of an accessory structure;
- can't have outdoor storage areas;
- have limits on their pickup and delivery; and

- can't add to on-street parking demand.

Generally, these rules keep the residential character of a mixed-use or single-purpose residential building. In order to avoid these restrictions, a change of use from a residential to a commercial use would be required.

## 5. Changes of Use.

When someone wants to change how their property is used, a change of use permit is required if the new use is subject to different development standards from the existing use. Exceptions are set forth in Director's Rule 51-88, *Requirement for a Master Use Permit when there is an Establishment, Expansion, or Change of Use*. These exceptions generally apply when the standards for the new use are more permissive than those applying to the prior use.

Director's Rule 51-88 lists development standards that are exempt from change of use permits. Very few changes are exempt from the change of use permit, but development standards not likely to be affected by the change of use are generally not examined. When the old and new uses are compared, a number of factors are considered, including life safety, building code occupancies, whether the new use is allowed outright in the zone or as a conditional use, and the minimum parking requirement, among others. Once the new use passes this review, the change of use permit is issued.

Changes of use that fail this review typically do so because of life safety issues or the minimum parking requirement. Changes of use that fail due to the parking requirement appear to affect small businesses and the owners of small commercial spaces the most. Larger businesses and buildings benefit from professional property managers who anticipate the costs of providing parking for tenants and patrons. Small proprietors too often fail to anticipate the expense of providing additional parking and do not have adequate reserves to construct additional spaces, lease off-site spaces within 800 feet, or pursue a variance.

A typical change of use that generates a parking deficit will be a retail space (1

parking space per 350 square feet) changing to a restaurant (1 space per 200 square feet), and the resulting deficit is likely to be only a few spaces. For example, assuming a fairly typical 2,000 square feet space with no applicable waiver, the difference would be four parking spaces. These parking spaces would need to be found within 800 feet of the proposed restaurant, or the restaurant would not be permitted to open in that space. The business would need to find a new place to locate and the property owner would need to find a new tenant.



## **B. Development Standards**

Development standards regulate the size, shape, siting, density and other related elements of development. They are intended to create a consistent character within an area and to limit the impacts of new development on surrounding uses. Seattle's development standards for commercial areas include requirements that regulate the bulk of buildings, that encourage a strong pedestrian orientation, that provide for an appropriate amount of parking at appropriate locations, that require "open space" as an amenity for residents in commercial areas, and that encourage appropriate screening and landscaping.

### **1. Height, Bulk and Density**

Bulk refers to the outside form of a building – how big a building is on its site, how much space it takes up. Density refers to the interior space in a building – how many units are in a building, compared to its site area; how much floor space is in a building compared to its site area. Within limits, buildings with the same density can be very different in terms of their bulk. Likewise, buildings of similar bulk can have very different interior densities, based on how they are designed.

In the Commercial and Neighborhood Commercial zones, the bulk and density of new development is primarily controlled in four ways. The factors that are intended to limit the size and bulk of projects in commercial areas include:

- Allowed height;
- Setback requirements for projects next to residential areas
- Floor area ratio density limits in areas with height limits over 65 feet; and
- Limits on upper-story lot coverage for residential floors.

In addition, parking requirements and limits on residential densities in single-purpose residential development can also influence the bulk of buildings.

Of the four direct limits, all but the last apply to non-residential projects, and for many commercial-only projects under the current code the only real limit is the height limit. Only residential projects have upper-story lot coverage limits, and generally, only single-purpose residential buildings have residential density limits. Within new mixed-use structures, there is no density limit for the number of units that can be built, and so other development standards become the limiting factors.

The first and foremost limiting factor for residential projects is the parking requirement. Parking is expensive; it can take up much of the physical space within the envelope of a building, and when it is built underground it becomes even more expensive. In any potential redevelopment, the first regulation to be examined by a developer or architect is parking requirements. Parking will often be the determining factor in whether or not a new building is financially feasible. Parking is a very complex issue and is treated elsewhere in this document.

Secondarily, the number of residences in a new building is limited by the height limit. This is a fairly obvious standard; the taller the allowed height, the more floors and the more units that can be built. In commercial zones, height limits are mapped separately and different heights may apply to the same zone depending on the location. Generally, changing the maximum allowed height of a commercial zone must be done through the rezone process.

Lastly, in most commercially-zoned areas, any building with residential units is subject

to a maximum upper-story lot coverage limit of 64%. This means any story above the ground level that is occupied by residential uses in a mixed-use building can cover no more square footage than 0.64 times the square footage of the lot being developed.<sup>2</sup>

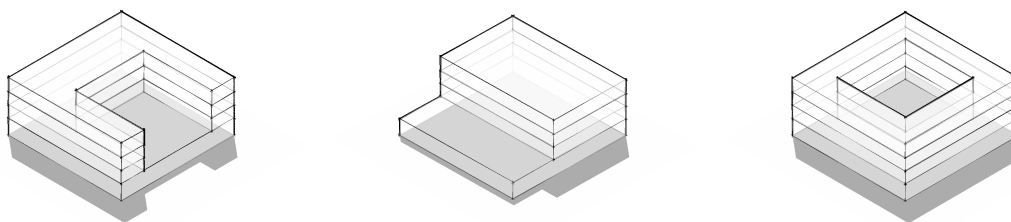
The 64% upper-story lot coverage requirement for residential uses in commercial areas evolved from a requirement that originally stated that upper stories were limited to 80% of the width and 80% of the depth of a structure. While the 64% requirement is a more flexible bulk control than the older requirement, its effect reaches well beyond bulk. Implemented well before Design Review began, it is a primary driver of the form of new mixed-use structures built in Seattle.

massing to better fit the context of a site. It also provides the flexibility for providing ground-level amenities such as plazas without giving up valuable leasable floor area. However, for projects that do not go through the design review process, the standard is rigid in terms of what amount of massing is allowed in ground level or upper story locations.

This standard also creates some amount of policy tension, in that the majority of mixed-use development takes place in zones within urban center and village boundaries. These are the very places that the Comprehensive Plan encourages housing density.

Research in Seattle zones without this type of requirement, such as in the Seattle Cascade Mixed zone and in Belltown, has

**Figure IV-1**  
**Three Options for Meeting the**  
**64% Upper Level Lot Area Requirement in a 40-foot zone**



Under the 64% upper level requirement, upper stories may be built to the lot line, with a light/air well or courtyard consuming 36% of the upper stories (see Figure IV-1). The 64% requirement therefore does not consistently limit the bulk of a building, but rather acts more as a limit on residential densities.

This development standard is often departed from in the Design Review process. The Design Review process allows for flexibility in the amount and location of a building's

shown that market preference and building code requirements for light and air access to units will generally lead a developer to use modulation and façade breaks in upper stories with residential uses.

In multifamily zones, Seattle regulates density with development standards, including lot coverage, setback, and parking requirements, in addition to the maximum density limits that are also in place.

Maximum density limits are in place in commercial zones to limit single purpose residential buildings. However, because no density limits apply for mixed-use structures, it is rare to see single purpose

<sup>2</sup> The requirement does not apply to commercial uses, including offices, or parking, which are permitted to occupy 100% of the upper story.



This Belltown building provided ground and upper level setbacks without 64% lot coverage requirement.

structures outside of the areas they are expressly allowed without the density limit. This strong incentive has created the perception that Seattle “requires” mixed-use development in commercial zones, or that there is a “penalty” to developers for not building mixed-use buildings, even in locations where ground floor commercial uses may not be viable.

Setbacks are a common method of controlling bulk, and they are widely used in Seattle’s residential zones. A setback (also called a ‘required yard’ in single family areas) simply says how far away a structure must be from a property line. For most commercially-zoned lots, no setbacks are required. However, setbacks are used when a commercially-zoned lot abuts a residential zone. In such a situation, a new commercial building must set its upper stories back at least ten feet from the adjoining property line. Triangle-shaped setbacks are also required on the part of the street-facing lot line of commercial lots adjacent to

residential lots to help maintain a consistent street front.

The use of a floor area ratio (FAR) is a widely accepted tool for regulating bulk and density that provides flexibility for building designers. It is used in most major cities in the country, particularly within their more urban centers, and is especially prevalent for non-residential development. The FAR is used in higher density zones in Seattle, including for non-residential development downtown, as well as within the commercial zones with height limits above 65 feet.

The FAR determines the maximum gross square footage in a new building. In the absence of other regulations, an allowed FAR of 1 (or 1:1) would allow a one-story, lot line to lot line structure; a 2-story structure covering half the lot, or a 3-story structure covering a third of the lot. An FAR of 2 (2:1) could allow a 2 story structure covering the entire lot or a 4-story structure covering half the lot. In many places, FAR is used without a height limit, giving a great deal of flexibility for building massing.

Most of Seattle’s commercial zones don’t have prescribed FARs. Instead, floor area ratios of buildings in Seattle’s commercial zones are influenced by a number of other factors including height limit, intended uses, and location. Zoned height limits indicate how many stories can be built, and thus how much space can be fit within a building. Zones with higher height limits tend to create higher density buildings. The second factor is the mix of uses intended for a building. Auto-oriented uses such as gas stations have very low FARs, office buildings and hotels tend to have relatively high FARs, because multi-story buildings are the norm for these uses. Finally, the location of the building also tends to influence the FAR of a new building. Denser neighborhoods tend to have higher land costs, which leads developers to try to

make the most efficient use of their investment in the land that will work for the uses intended for the site.

## **2. Parking**

Personal mobility and parking influence the form of our built environment and dictate the spatial relationship between uses in modern zoning. There is a strong relationship between the availability of free parking and the number of people choosing to drive alone, especially during peak commute periods. The numbers of people driving alone (single occupancy vehicles or SOVs) dramatically affects the effectiveness of Seattle's transportation and transit systems and the quality of neighborhood business districts.

The City's Comprehensive Plan supports short-term parking for customers and long-term parking for residents more than parking for commuters to jobs in neighborhood business districts. Off-street parking regulations within the Land Use Code and related review processes generally support parking for carpools and other vehicles with passengers (high occupancy vehicles or HOVs) over parking for SOVs. The code also provides waivers and incentives for transit, bicycling and walking. Such regulatory tools for distinguishing one kind of parked vehicle from another and to reduce parking based on non-SOV use or facilities make the Land Use Code more, not less complicated. Seattle's experiences to date have shown such complex requirements as costly to enforce.

Project applicants often say the Code requires too much parking, creating unnecessary expenses for their development. On the other hand when older buildings in a neighborhood have no on-site parking, neighbors will say too little is required of new development.

Parking and access to it take up space and influence building cost, aesthetics and orientation. On-site parking also has the potential to create safety problems at locations where the paths of pedestrians and automobiles must cross.

### **a) Cost of Parking**

Parking minimums can distort market forces when they require more parking than a project's occupants or visitors would otherwise use and/or be willing to pay for. A single parking space can cost up to \$30,000, depending on factors such as location, land costs, parking demand in the surrounding area, and whether the parking is provided within a structure or on the surface. A recent San Francisco study estimates that providing one parking space per residential unit increases that unit's cost by 12.5% and two spaces increases the cost by 25%.<sup>3</sup> Other studies suggest the cost of providing parking increases housing prices by more than the direct cost of the parking spaces.<sup>4</sup> The cost of most required parking in Seattle, however, is not obvious its users. Instead, parking costs are incorporated into rents and therefore are hidden from residents, employees and customers who use the parking, resulting in unwise use of the parking resource.

An expectation of free parking often drives perceptions of parking supply for commercial uses. For example, in the University District, a high percentage of shoppers report a shortage of evening parking even though nearby pay lots are

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<sup>3</sup> Littman, T. "Parking Requirement Impacts on Housing Affordability," Victoria Transport Policy Institute, Victoria, B.C., Canada, 23 October 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Shoup, D.C., "An Opportunity to Reduce Minimum Parking Requirements," *Journal of the American Planning Association*, vol. 61. No.1., Winter 1995, pp. 14-28.

rarely full and many Ave merchants validate parking.<sup>5</sup>

The expectation of free parking forms the basis of concern over spillover parking. As development occurs, a valued resource heretofore provided at no cost (i.e., on-street parking nearby,) becomes less available. Businesses and residents who hadn't had to pay for their parking in the past, start to need to pay for parking either directly or through increased time finding parking or traveling between a more distant parking space and the place they're going. In the past, the City has sought to have new development compensate for these increased costs through high parking requirements.

#### b) Quantity

The commercial policies of the

of neighborhood commercial uses that encourage transit and pedestrian activity and variety of services in commercial areas.”

Current required minimums are higher than anticipated demand.

In 1999-2000, the City of Seattle conducted a city-wide Comprehensive Neighborhood Parking Study (CNPS) that included surveys of parking occupancy at many businesses in Seattle, measuring average and peak parking demand during a typical weekday. From this survey, data about parking demand for the seven most common land use types have been drawn.

Table III-5 compares parking requirements with averages of demand found in the CNPS for uses that require 1 space per 350 square

**Table III-5**  
**Parking requirement compared to parking demand citywide**

Where the current requirement is:	Demand was found to be:
1 space per 350 sf [multipurpose convenience store, general retail sales/service, medical services, animal health services, auto parts/accessory sales, etc.]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 space per 442 sf</li> </ul>
1 space per 200 sf [restaurants, drinking establishments]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 space per 177 sf</li> </ul>

Source: Comprehensive Neighborhood Parking Study, City of Seattle, Strategic Planning Office, August 2000

Comprehensive Plan (at L175) direct Seattle to

“[s]et requirements to discourage underused parking facilities, which may mean tolerating occasional spillover parking, and allow minimum parking requirements to be waived or reduced to promote the maintenance and development

feet (general retail uses) and 1 space per 200 square feet (restaurant uses). For uses requiring 1 space per 350 square feet, average peak demand was 80% less than the required minimum. For uses requiring 1 space per 200 square feet, average peak demand was 13% higher than the required minimum.

Peak demand for these uses varied widely from site to site and across Seattle neighborhoods. A few successful businesses generated peak demand several times greater

<sup>5</sup> Comprehensive Neighborhood Parking Study, Table 1 at 6, City of Seattle, Strategic Planning Office, August 2000

than the required minimum. For general retail, 35% of the sample had parking demands below the required minimum, 11% used more than 1 space per 175 square feet (twice the required minimum), and 17% used less than 1 space per 1000 square feet (one third of the required minimum). For restaurant uses, 61% of the sample had demands below the required minimum, 17% used more than 1 space per 100 square feet (twice the required minimum) and 10% used less than 1 space per 1000 square feet (one fifth of the required minimum).

The CNPS data highlight the difficulty of establishing a single minimum requirement that prevents parking spillover on the one hand and discourages underused parking on the other. Demand varies widely when, for example, a popular restaurant replaces a failing restaurant in the same space. The City study did not include weekend days, thus peak demand for some restaurants and retail was not captured. It is estimated that an even greater variance in the data would

average demand for all uses. Many businesses whose peak demand falls below the minimum are paying to provide unused parking. While programs such as Seattle Department of Transportation's *Making the Parking System Work* program encourage and facilitate shared parking in order to more efficiently use existing parking, the Land Use Code generally does not allow the sharing of spaces that are part of a use's minimum requirement.

### c) Demand and Geography.

The CNPS data show that parking demand varies depending on proximity to Downtown, major employment or activity centers, like the University of Washington or high transit accessibility. Areas with these characteristics, namely Seattle's Urban Centers, tend to have lower parking demand than other areas. Based on this precedent, Table III-6 summarizes average peak demand data for businesses located inside Urban Centers and Villages.

**Table III-6**  
**Parking requirement compared to parking demand**

Where the current requirement is:	Demand was found to be:
1 space per 350 sf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 space per 510 sf in Urban Centers</li> <li>1 space per 515 sf in Hub and Residential Urban Villages</li> </ul>
1 space per 200 sf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 space per 205 sf in Urban Centers</li> <li>1 space per 260 sf in Hub and Residential Urban Villages</li> </ul>

Source: Comprehensive Neighborhood Parking Study, City of Seattle, Strategic Planning Office, August 2000

occur on weekends. Some will have a higher weekend demand while others may have limited weekend hours.

Where is the appropriate place on the distribution curve for the minimum amount of required parking? Currently, the minimum parking requirement is close to the

The 2000 Census collected data on vehicles available per household, which is a useful substitute for estimating residential parking demand. Table [\*3] shows vehicles available per household for Urban Centers,



**Table III-7**  
**Vehicles available per household for select neighborhoods**

	<b>All units:</b>	<b>Owner occupied units:</b>	<b>Renter occupied units:</b>
<b>Urban Centers/Urban Center Villages</b>			
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Hill/Capitol Hill</b>			
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Hill</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.5</b>
<b>12<sup>th</sup> Avenue</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>0.8</b>
<b>Capitol Hill</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Pike/Pine</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>0.5</b>
<b>South Lake Union (proposed Urban Center)</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>0.7</b>
<b>Uptown</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>0.85</b>
<b>University Community</b>			
<b>Ravenna</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>
<b>University District Northwest</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>0.9</b>
<b>Northgate</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>0.9</b>
<b>Hub Urban Villages and Residential Urban Villages</b>			
<b>Lake City</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.1</b>
<b>Greenwood-Phinney Ridge</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.2</b>
<b>West Seattle Junction</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.0</b>
<b>Columbia City</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>0.8</b>
<b>Areas Outside of Urban Villages</b>			
<b>Maple Leaf</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.5</b>
<b>Magnolia</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.3</b>
<b>Alki</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.4</b>
<b>Seward Park</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>1.5</b>

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Urban Villages, and for a selection of non-Center or Village neighborhoods.

Tables IV-6 and IV-7 both suggest different average parking demand inside and outside of Urban Centers and Urban Villages. For residential and general retail uses, demand for parking is lower inside the Centers and Villages. Factors accounting for this difference include

- the availability of transit and other alternative transportation modes,
- nearby array of goods and services allowing for more trips to be made by walking,
- proximity to employment centers allowing for walking or bicycling to work, and
- higher proportion of older buildings built before parking requirements, meaning that parking is simply not available and people with cars choose not to live in those units.

Restaurant uses were found to have a higher parking demand inside Centers than in Villages, but that both types of areas have lower demand. This can be explained by the higher prevalence of destination entertainment districts featuring restaurants, in Urban Center areas such as Broadway, Uptown, and Pike/Pine.

#### d) Parking Waivers

The amount of parking required on a site may be determined by both the citywide requirements in the Land Use Code and specific environmental review of a project under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). The Land Use Code's requirements are intended to balance on-street parking impacts with the potential impacts that are exacerbated by an excessive parking supply, such as peak-hour traffic congestion, air quality, non-point source

pollution, and incentives for transit. SEPA review of parking impacts, which focuses on the potential for parking spillover, can result in the City requiring more parking than would otherwise be required. Seattle has exempted parking impacts from SEPA review only in Pike/Pine and Seattle Cascade Mixed zones.

While the City estimates the same parking demand for each use category in most zones, parking waivers are granted in pedestrian-oriented areas. A 2,500 square foot base parking waiver applies to all buildings within NC zones. Additionally, higher waivers are set for businesses in areas with P1 and P2 designations.

These waivers are an important characteristic that distinguishes the P1/P2 designations from the Neighborhood Commercial zones. These waivers recognize that most customers of smaller

**Table III-8**

#### **Reduction to Required Parking in P1 and P2 Designated Zones**

	NC1	NC2	NC3
Retail sales and service uses, except eating and drinking establishments; customer service offices; and entertainment uses, except motion picture theaters.	P1 and P2: Parking waived for first 4,000 sq. ft.	P1: Parking waived for first 15,000 sq. ft. P2: Parking waived for first 5,000 sq. ft.	P1: Parking waived for first 25,000 sq. ft. P2: Parking waived for first 5,000 sq. ft.
Motion picture theaters	P1 and P2: Parking waived for first 150 seats.		
Eating and drinking establishments	P1 and P2: Parking waived for first 2,500 sq. ft.		

businesses in P1/P2 areas will access them on foot so less parking is required.

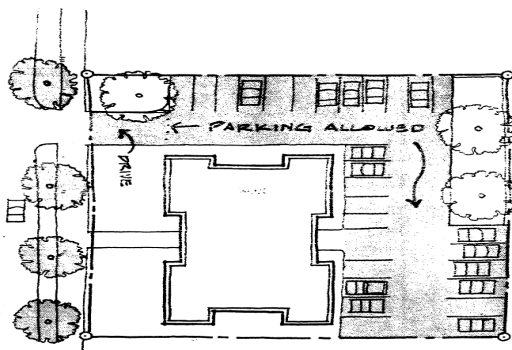
Overall, the parking waivers associated with the P designations have worked well and have not resulted in intrusive spillover parking into surrounding residential areas. Further, the CNPS indicates that parking requirements could be reduced while still meeting parking demand. The urban villages strategy indicates that specific areas of the city should encourage density and non-auto modes of travel through targeted transportation strategies, as well as through the development of non-auto oriented development.

#### e) Location of parking on the lot.

The location of surface parking has significant impacts on how neighborhood business districts function. In C zones, parking may be located anywhere on the lot, and is generally located in front of a building in locations readily visible to passing motorists.

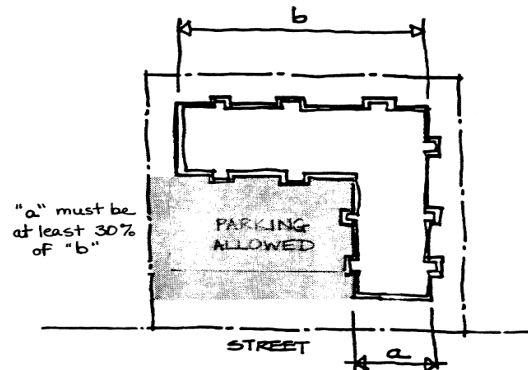
In pedestrian-oriented NC zones, the location of parking related to streets, lot lines and structures asserts a profound influence on the configuration of resulting development. The current Code allows parking between the side or rear lot line and a structure in NC zones (see Figure IV-2.)

**Figure IV-2**  
Allowed parking locations in NC2.



If a lot fronts on two or more streets, or if a building meets the street for 30% of its width (see Figure IV-3), parking may be allowed between the structure and a front lot line.

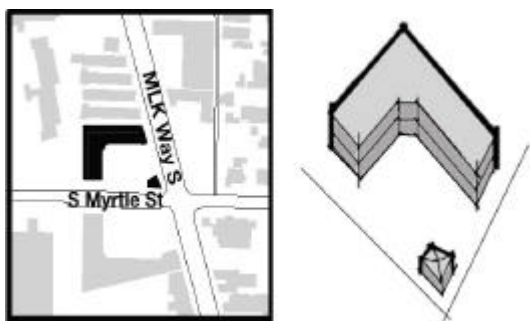
**Figure IV-3**  
Allowed parking in front of a structure.



These limits are largely successful at separating pedestrians from vehicles and orienting buildings toward the neighborhood commercial streetscape. However, the 30% rule provides opportunities for site configurations that still allow parking to consume a significant amount of the street frontage, separating pedestrians from businesses by surface parking lots, interrupting the continuity of street level uses and pedestrian activity. An example of one configuration that meets the letter of the Code is shown in Figure IV-4.

**Figure IV-4**  
Small corner building allows parking close to the corner



**Figure IV-4 (cont.)**

The example is in an NC3 zone. The character of the intersection is relatively auto-oriented. Without the small café, the larger structure might have been required to front along Martin Luther King Jr. Way S. Two of the remaining three corners of the intersection have parking lots at the corner. Although the café is popular, the small structure seems a token gesture marginally justifying the large auto-oriented structure behind it. Patrons of the corner café, as well as pedestrians stepping out of the crosswalks, must cross large driveways.

Similarly, a special exception process in the NC2 zones allows for parking in front of buildings if the following conditions exist:

- the streetscape is so inhospitable to pedestrians that there's an increased likelihood that patrons will drive from one business to another,
- the lot is narrow and alley access infeasible so that a large portion of the lot would need to be devoted to a driveway, and
- the NC2 zone lacks strong edges to buffer adjacent low density residential areas from parking.

Rather than helping to transform auto-oriented commercial districts into more pedestrian-friendly environments, this set of conditions seems intended to retain the auto-orientation of neighborhoods that would otherwise become more pedestrian-friendly over time.

Businesses in Seattle have largely adapted to standards that require them to conform to pedestrian uses. For example, many fast food restaurants have eliminated drive-in facilities and stand-alone buildings in favor of building designs that allow walk-up traffic. In most commercial zones, there is little guidance to where access to off-street parking should be provided. Consequently, under current rules for most zones, the land use code doesn't restrict how cars entering and exiting parking lots cross sidewalks.

In the Pedestrian-designated areas, parking location is more tightly controlled:

- In P1 areas parking is not permitted along the principal pedestrian street front
- In P2 areas, parking is permitted to the side of a building only if providing parking to the rear of the building or off-site would require demolishing a commercial structure; parking to the side of a building can't exceed 60 feet along the principal pedestrian street front.

In P1 and P2 designated areas, a hierarchy of preferences for access to parking is provided: access from alleys is preferred, then from side streets, and only if there is no access from an alley or a side street is a curb cut across the principal pedestrian street permitted.

### 3. Pedestrian Environments

Creating healthy and vital pedestrian-oriented business districts has been one of the key goals of the City's regulations for commercial areas. In order to create intensively pedestrian business districts, the Pedestrian (P) designations and their identifying Principal Pedestrian Streets were adopted in 1986 as part of the process that established pedestrian-oriented Neighborhood Commercial zones. The P designations function similarly: to encourage "pedestrian interest and activity at the street level" in a way that is more intensive than the NC zones generally.

The Pedestrian 1 (P1) and Pedestrian 2 (P2) designations apply to NC-zoned properties abutting streets that have been identified as Principal Pedestrian Streets. These streets are identified in Section 23.47.040 of the Seattle Land Use Code. The Principal Pedestrian Street designation does not affect standards for development of the right-of-way. The P1 and P2 designation *does affect* development on abutting property, however.

Pedestrian-designated areas offer less flexibility than the NC zones in terms of street front façade treatment, setbacks, and permitted uses. The P-designations also offer substantially higher parking waivers in

order to encourage "non-auto modes of transportation".

Elements of pedestrian-oriented developments and streetscapes encouraged by the P-designations include the following:

- ▶ Strategic use of parking waivers to encourage non auto-oriented travel.
- ▶ Parking location and access that does not conflict with pedestrian travel.
- ▶ Parking that is located away from key pedestrian streets and intersections.
- ▶ Limited curb cuts in identified pedestrian-oriented commercial areas.
- ▶ Frontage design of buildings, including overhead weather protection, pedestrian lighting (such as sconces), blank façade restrictions, transparency,
- ▶ Setback requirements—both street-level and upper story setbacks to provide a scale of development that is comfortable to humans at the street-level.
- ▶ Modulation of street-level setback to provide relief and to compensate for potentially intimidating bulk, narrow sidewalks, or speeds/ volume on adjoining streets
- ▶ Design of open space on private properties that co-mingles with the

Table III-8

Comparison of Pedestrian Designations and Commercial Zone Standards

	Pedestrian Designation	NC zones	C zones
Street frontage	Front can not be setback more than 10 feet from the property line  Required uses must occupy the first ten feet above grade of sidewalk	No required setback for the first 13 feet for mixed use and nonresidential uses.	Same as NC
Blank Façade	limited to 30 feet in width, not to exceed 40% of the structure along the principal pedestrian street.	Landscaping or artwork permitted in front of blank façades.	Landscaping or artwork required only when across the street from a residential lot.

public realm.

- ▶ Appropriate street right-of-way design that includes wide sidewalks, curb bulbs, stamped sidewalks, and mini open-spaces at street level.
- ▶ Requiring and/or restricting specific street-level uses to those that encourage and respond to pedestrian activity.

All Neighborhood Commercial areas are intended to be pedestrian-oriented business districts. However, the P1 and P2 designations are intended to promote a more intensive pedestrian-oriented shopping district, where non-auto modes of transportation are encouraged. Provisions that apply to P-designated areas are more restrictive than those that apply to NC zones in terms of street front requirements, street-level uses, parking location and access, and parking quantities.

#### **a) Street Front Design**

In general, buildings in P-designated areas are subject to requirements above and beyond those applied in the NC zones in order to provide interest at the street-level.

The P designations restrict the first story setback and blank frontages along principal pedestrian streets. These have worked well to ensure compatible scale and street presence in the limited context of the P designation. However, several mixed-use projects outside of P designations have successfully incorporated wider street-level setbacks that offer open space for pedestrians. An example of this is the Lake Side Plaza in the Green Lake area, where the building provides a courtyard that is set-back from the street considerably further than would be allowed within a P-designation.

The design review process has resulted in projects that incorporate open space into the

sidewalk/ street frontage of buildings in lieu of open space within the design of the building.

Flexibility in upper story setbacks makes sense in pedestrian-oriented areas when there is modulation along the street frontage, and when the setback incorporates usable open space in the form of wider sidewalks or circulation areas. The Harrison is located on busy 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue East. In spite of the proximity of traffic, the Harrison creates a welcoming pedestrian realm by combining a small courtyard with the sidewalk at the street level.

Similarly, the angled entryway at the southwest corner on the 45<sup>th</sup> Street Plaza widens the sidewalk on the corner in order to accommodate a high level of pedestrian traffic. The pedestrian environment is further enhanced through the use of overhead weather protection, high, transparent windows and the use of street trees and planters at-grade that soften the building.

#### **b) Street level uses**

A collection of appealing uses along a street are perhaps the most critical element of a pedestrian-oriented business district. The pedestrian designations acknowledge this by generally requiring commercial uses at the street level. This has been one of the primary reasons for encouraging residential buildings to include non-residential uses in commercial areas.

The regulations for mixed-use buildings require that 80% of the street front be occupied by nonresidential uses, and restrict drive-in uses. The pedestrian designations (P1 and P2) further restrict street-level uses to those that have the potential to animate the sidewalk such as retail, food vending and personal services. Drive-in uses are prohibited.

Requiring ground-level uses in designated pedestrian districts can result in well-designed, animated storefronts that contribute to the vitality of commercial districts. However, ground level retail in parts of commercial districts with poor visibility or a lack of a strong commercial orientation can lead to ground-level space that sit vacant for long periods, creating an appearance that may discouraged rather than encourage pedestrian activity. Among the areas that can be less attractive for ground level uses are the edges of commercial districts; in locations, such as the back side of a commercial district that are less likely to experience pedestrian traffic; or, in underdeveloped sections of long commercial

strips.

Some neighborhoods have provided strong direction about the location where street level uses should be concentrated. For example, the Pike/Pine overlay requires street level uses along Pike and Pine Streets, but allows single-purpose residential structures on the side streets that join Pike and Pine. The Columbia City neighborhood plan recommended rezones of some areas along Rainier Avenue South in order to encourage a more concentrated commercial district. Finally, a section of 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue, off Madison was rezoned in response to the Madison-Miller neighborhood plan to allow more residential development. One single purpose residential building, the 19<sup>th</sup>

**Table III-9**  
**Street Level Use Requirements by Zone Category**

	NC1	NC2	NC3	Pedestrian Designation	Residential Designation (NC/R)
Street Level Uses	<p>Mixed use development shall feature 80% nonresidential at street front.</p> <p>Nonresidential space must be an average of 30 feet deep, up to 50% of the building footprint.</p> <p>Street level floor height of Mixed Use Development must be 13 feet.</p> <p>Density limits for single purpose residential.</p> <p>Nonresidential size of use limits progressively greater per zone (23.47.010).</p>			<p>All of the NC Standards and:</p> <p>80% of street level uses must include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personal and household retail sales and service</li> <li>• eating and drinking establishments</li> <li>• Customer service offices</li> <li>• Entertainments uses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pet grooming</li> <li>• Public library</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>NC standards, but:</p> <p>Street level height and depth limits do not apply</p> <p>No density limits for single-purpose residential</p>
Drive-in Businesses	Prohibited	Max. of 2 lanes	Max. of 4 lanes	Prohibited	Prohibited
Principal Use Parking	Generally Prohibited	Generally Permitted		Prohibited	Generally Permitted

Note: C zones must meet the NC standards only if a project wants to exceed maximum density limits for residential uses or maximum size limits for offices. There are no limits on drive-ins or parking.



Avenue Lofts, has already been built under that new zoning.

Many neighborhoods have also expressed interest in requiring street level uses at the cores of their neighborhood business districts, in order to maintain and enhance the existing pedestrian-orientation of their neighborhood. Some neighborhoods have been reticent about applying one of the Pedestrian designations, however, because of the parking waivers that are granted under those designations.

#### 4. Open Space

In Seattle's commercial areas, projects must provide usable open space for residents.

These spaces tend to take the form of outdoor communal space such as roof decks or courtyards, with many units also having private decks or balconies. Some buildings also include indoor communal spaces, such as gyms, pools or party rooms.

Residents use on-site open spaces frequently and for a number of different uses. In a survey of 133 residents of mostly new projects built in commercial or Downtown zones, outdoor communal space was most often available to residents, but less frequently used than private outdoor space or indoor communal space.

Question	%
Have private deck or balcony	65%
% who have a deck or balcony that use it at least weekly	77%
Have indoor amenity space	71%
% who have indoor space that use it at least weekly	51%
% who have outdoor communal space that use it at least weekly	90%
Use outdoor space at least weekly	38%

The most frequent use of all amenity spaces was to provide fresh air, with close to half of respondents using outdoor space for entertaining and grilling. Indoor spaces are most frequently used for exercising at building gyms or pools.

### Use of Amenity Spaces (% of respondents using space)

Use	Private Outdoor	Shared Outdoor	Shared Indoor
Fresh Air	86%	77%	N/A
Entertaining/ Dining	44%	49%	49%
Cooking (Grill)	44%	42%	N/A
Gardening	37%	3%	N/A
Storage	27%	2%	N/A
Smoking	27%	12%	N/A
Other	17%	26%	15%
Pet Area	15%	9%	N/A
Enjoying a View	5%	7%	N/A
Children's Play Area	5%	5%	2%
Reading	2%	3%	14%
Exercising	1%	N/A	83%
Sun Bathing	1%	5%	N/A
Watching Movies	N/A	1%	35%

*italics = self-reported*

Many developers have provided required open space on roof decks, which provide outdoor space that allows tenants privacy, without requiring any building setbacks or other impacts on the amount of developable space. However, roof decks can be expensive to build because they require extra-strong roofing, and elevators that can reach the roof. According to the survey, roof decks may also not be used as much as other types of recreation space. Because they are hidden on the roof, they may also not provide as much visual interest as other open space configurations.

### Amount of Space Required

Current open space requirements for residential uses in commercial zones were first introduced in 1988. Since then, no significant changes have been made to the provisions, even when substantial changes were made in 1989 to open space requirements for multifamily zones.

As a result of a piecemeal approach to adjusting open space requirements, and unintentionally, a significantly greater amount of open space is required in commercial zones than for comparable residential development in other zones. Table III-10 summarizes open space requirements for residential uses according to zone in which they are located. Table III-10 also describes comparable open space requirements, or lack thereof, for Portland, Oregon and Vancouver, British Columbia.

Of the six comparable requirements, commercial zones are required to provide the most residential open space. Table III-11 shows how much open space would be required under today's standards for each of 13 projects built in commercial zones. Table III-11 also shows how much open space would be required if the projects were located in a zone other than commercial.

Some commercial and downtown zones have very similar development standards. However, open space requirements can vary widely across these similar zones. Table III-11 shows that the residential open space requirement in commercial zones can be up to four times greater than in downtown zones. In downtown zones, an area equal to 5% of the structure's residential gross floor area is required for "common recreation area." In commercial zones, an area equal to 20% of the structure's residential gross floor area is required for "usable open space."

**Table III-10**  
**Residential Open Space Requirements**

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Residential Open Space Required</b>
<b>Seattle's Multifamily Zones</b>	
Lowrise (L)	25% of the lot area if provided at ground level, or 30% of the lot area if provided above ground level.
Midrise (MR)	25% of the lot area if provided at ground level, or 30% of the lot area if provided above ground level.
Highrise (HR)	50% of the lot area at ground level, or 25% of the lot area at ground level plus 30% of the lot area above ground level.
<b>Seattle's Mixed-Use Zones</b>	
<b>Commercial (C and NC)</b>	<b>20% of the structure's gross floor area in residential use. Open space may be provided at or above ground level.</b>
Downtown and Seattle Cascade Mixed (SCM)	Open space ("common recreation area") is only required for projects that have more than 20 units. 5% of the structure's gross floor area in residential use. It may be provided at or above ground level. In addition, up to 50% of the required area may be inside (i.e. gymnasium, swimming pool, television room, etc).
<b>Other Cities</b>	
Portland, Oregon	No explicit open space requirement in comparable zones. According to Portland Planners, they allow the market to dictate the amount of open space provided. In its low density residential zones, Portland requires 48 sq. ft per unit of "required outdoor areas."
Vancouver, British Columbia	No explicit open space requirement. Like Portland, they allow the market to dictate the amounts of open space provided. The City of Vancouver also negotiates amenities on a case-by-case basis.

In Downtown Mixed Residential (DMR) zones, residential structures, or residential portions of structures, are permitted at heights of 85' to 240', with unlimited density and 100% lot coverage up to 65'. In Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC3) zones located within the First Hill Urban Village, residential structures, or residential portions of structures, are permitted at heights of 160', also with unlimited density and 100% lot coverage up to 35'. Commercial zones outside of the First Hill Urban Village allow residential structures, or residential portions of structures, to achieve a range of heights,

including 85', 125', and 160'. However, those zones also have Floor Area Ratio (FAR) limits, which are used to control the scale and bulk of structures.

It is illustrative to examine the per-unit open space required. In project #12, the amount of per-unit open space required under commercial regulations is 186 sq. ft. If the same project were developed in a DMR zone, then the per-unit open space required would be 47 sq. ft – the size of a deck. Considering that the two zones allow comparable development, the difference in the two requirements is extraordinary.

**Table III-11**  
**Residential Open Space Required under Commercial and Other Zoning standards**

Sample Project	Project Information				Square feet of Open Space Required by Zone			
	Zoning	Lot Size	Units	Res. Floor Area	Commercial	Lowrise/ Midrise	Highrise	Downtown and SCM*
1.	NC1-30	8,735	8	15,723	<b>3,145</b>	2,184	4,368	0
2.	NC1-30	11,300	7	7,840	<b>1,568</b>	2,825	5,650	0
3.	NC1-30	12,688	17	15,041	<b>3,008</b>	3,172	6,344	0
4.	NC1-30	13,310	18	9,652	<b>1,930</b>	3,328	6,655	0
5.	NC1-30	36,294	30	31,017	<b>6,203</b>	9,074	18,147	1,551
6.	NC2-40	9,884	19	9,600	<b>1,920</b>	2,471	4,942	0
7.	NC3-40	4,400	8	7,663	<b>1,533</b>	1,100	2,200	0
8.	NC3-40	6,880	10	9,447	<b>1,889</b>	1,720	3,440	0
9.	NC3-65	15,750	62	42,441	<b>8,488</b>	3,938	7,875	2,122
10.	NC3-65	17,700	57	56,977	<b>11,395</b>	4,425	8,850	2,849
11.	NC3-65	19,450	24	20,931	<b>4,186</b>	4,863	9,725	1,047
12.	NC3-160	14,400	154	143,398	<b>28,679</b>	3,600	7,200	7,170
13.	C1-65	20,283	88	65,420	<b>13,084</b>	5,071	10,142	3,271

Overall, open space requirements in large projects in commercial zones can be much higher than in comparable areas. Tying the requirement to building square feet, as opposed to lot area, may create a disincentive to develop denser projects in commercial zones compared to multifamily zones, where requirements do not increase as the size of a project increases.

## **5. Additional Development Standards**

In addition to the development standards discussed above, the City regulates a number of other aspects of development, including setbacks, noise and odor, and live-work units.

### **a) Setbacks**

Unlike single-family areas, where setbacks and other requirements are intended to ensure a consistent building form; in most commercial zones, the code is intended to minimize impacts through its setback requirements. Setbacks are required in commercial zones only when:

- A commercial lot is next to the front yard of a residentially zoned lot.
- A structure in a commercial zone is taller than 13 feet and shares a side or rear lot line with a residentially zoned lot;
- Parking is at street level and abuts the street or a residentially zoned lot;
- A sidewalk is not wide enough to plant required street trees;
- Loading access is from an alley; or
- Mobile home parks, farm animals, or beehives are being sited in a commercial zone.

### **b) Landmark districts and structures**

Three of Seattle's designated historic districts include commercially zoned land, and 35 designated historic structures, sites, objects, and vessels are located in commercial areas. In order to ensure that these important community resources are able to be used and maintained, the City provides some flexibility for these structures. For example, the code allows open space, setback, screening, and landscaping standards to be waived for

designated structures or structures in designated districts. These waivers are subject to review by the Landmarks Preservation Board in order to make sure that changes to the building retain the character or features that led to their initial designation.

### **c) Phasing of development for large projects**

In order to provide consistent review for development on large sites and for projects that include a number of separate buildings, the City allows some projects to be phased. Reviewing major phased developments as a whole at the start of the project, gives the City the opportunity to assess the cumulative impacts of a string of projects. Without a major phased development process, the City would not be able to review a large project, such as University Village, which contains many sub-parts and is developed over a number of years. The major phased development process allows developers predictability for large projects that may be built in phases. They are able to receive permits under one set of rules and do not need to worry about how changing regulations would impact their plans. Under a major phased development permit, the developer, City and neighborhood understand the expected amount and type of development.

### **d) Regulations to Limit Negative impacts**

Activities in commercial districts can sometimes impact their neighbors. A number of regulations are in place to restrict the potential for negative impacts. These regulations address issues like noise and odor, light and glare, and standards for keeping animals.

#### **Noise**

The City limits potential noise impacts from activities in commercial areas in two ways.

Some identified activities, such as manufacturing, fabricating, and repairing are required to take place within an enclosed structure in pedestrian-oriented zones or near residential zones. These activities are likely to have noise impacts that can be reduced through the simple act of keeping them indoors. In addition, some uses, such as light manufacturing, vehicle repair, and recycling centers have been identified as “major noise generators.” When major noise generators are proposed, an acoustical consultant is hired to identify measures that need to be taken to meet identified noise standards for the area.

### **Odors**

Strong or acrid odors are controlled in similar ways. The City requires that odors be vented at least ten feet above a sidewalk, and directed away from residential uses. In addition, a number of uses are identified as major odor sources. These uses include activities such as vapor degreasing, animal food processing, and a number of cooking activities if they are not employed as part of a retail sales and service use. The City works with the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency on a site-by-site basis to identify specific measures to reduce the potential of odor emissions and airborne pollutants from these major odor sources.

### **Light and glare**

The City’s regulations regarding light and glare seek to balance the need to light structures, parking areas, and outdoor storage areas, while limiting light and glare on surrounding uses, enhancing commercial environments and encouraging energy conservation. A number of different requirements are in place to do this:

- Exterior lighting is required to be shielded and directed away from adjacent uses.

- Parking garages are required to shield their lighting.
- Driveways and parking lots are required to be screened to prevent headlights from impacting their neighbors.
- The height of light poles is limited.

In addition, the City regulates structures that are likely to cause glare because of highly reflective glass or other reflective siding. If they are near residential zones or major arterials, the developer is required to provide a diagram that shows those glare impacts, and modifications to the proposed building may be required.

### **Outdoor Activities**

Outdoor activities can have noise and visual impacts on the surrounding area. In order to contain those impacts and to ensure that development is appropriate to the neighborhood, the City places a number of limits on outdoor activities:

- In NC1 and NC2 zones, the amount of lot area dedicated to outdoor sales is limited.
- Outdoor storage is prohibited in NC1, NC2 and NC3 zones.
- The size of outdoor recycling collection is limited.
- A number of outdoor activities are required to be located away from residentially zoned lots.
- Outdoor activities are required to be screened and landscaped.

### **Garbage and recyclable storage**

Solid waste and recyclable materials storage is a small aspect of a commercial project, but because it needs to be readily accessible to both the tenants of the building and the company picking up the waste, it can be a difficult part of a building to fit onto a site.

The City requires a certain amount of storage space by building size and regulates its design, its accessibility, and access. Flexibility is provided if the standards are difficult to meet and alternative workable measures are proposed.

#### **Standards for keeping animals**

The keeping of farm animals and bees is rare in Seattle's commercial areas, but it does occur. Domestic fowl, farm animals, bees and small animals are each subject to specific regulations that limit the potential impact of these creatures on the surrounding neighborhood, generally by limiting the number of animals, birds or bees that can be kept on a particular lot.

### ***C. Additional Review: Design Review and SEPA***

In addition to the project review required for new development and new uses in commercial areas, two other review processes can exert a significant influence on commercial areas. Design Review and environmental review under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) are required for most projects built in neighborhood business districts. Both reviews look at the relationship between a specific proposal and its surroundings and provide opportunities for public comment and input into the design and planning of new buildings.

#### **1. Design Review**

Seattle's Design Review program provides a forum for neighborhoods, developers, architects, and City staff to work together to ensure that new developments contribute positively to Seattle's neighborhoods.

Design Review has three principal objectives:

1. To encourage better design and site planning that enhances the character of the city and ensures that new development sensitively fits into neighborhoods;
2. To provide flexibility in the application of development standards; and
3. To improve communication and participation among developers, neighbors and the City early in the design and siting of new development.

The Design Review process includes at least two public meetings of a citizen board that initially identifies key design guidelines out of a set of citywide and neighborhood guidelines and then reviews proposals according to those guidelines. The process also allows for waivers from specified standards in the land use code, if the board



agrees that the proposed designs would help the overall design of the building to fit into the neighborhood.

Most new construction in neighborhood business districts is subject to design review. In NC1, NC2 and NC3 zones, design review is required for buildings that will include at least 4 dwelling units or 4,000 square feet of nonresidential space. In C1 and C2 zones, projects within urban villages or next to single family zones, with at least 4 units or 12,000 square feet of nonresidential space are required to go through the design review process. Projects that don't meet those thresholds can opt to go through an administrative review process which does not involve review by the public board.

The design review process can recommend departures from the following standards:

- Setback requirements
- Design, location, and access to parking requirements
- Open space requirements
- Lot coverage limits
- Screening and landscaping requirements
- Standards for the location and design of nonresidential uses in mixed-use buildings

Departures are granted when a better building can be designed if more flexibility is given to a developer. Information on Code departures granted through Design Review provides some insight about the Code requirements that consistently constrain the design of new structures.

Nearly 50% of the Code departures occurred for projects within the NC3 zone, followed by roughly 20% in NC2 zones. The rest were roughly divided among Downtown, auto-oriented commercial zones, and split-zoned lots; no departures were sought or

granted in NC1 or Seattle Cascade Mixed zones.

The most frequently granted departures were related to mixed-use projects: upper level lot coverage requirements (approximately 22 instances) and required open space (approximately 19 instances). Most of the lot coverage departures allowed projects to cover more than 64% of the lot, by amounts ranging from 2%-10% of the lot area. Other relatively common departures were granted for reduced setbacks, less-than-required length of non-residential uses along street frontage, and reduced driveway or parking requirements.

Design review has proven to be a successful program, leading to better design of projects, providing better public input into a project's design and reducing the number of lawsuits over development proposals.

## **2. SEPA review**

The State Environmental Policy Act (RCW 43.21C) requires the City to consider the environmental impact of projects before making decisions. Among the purposes of this state law are to encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between humans and their environment and to promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere. The purposes set forth in the City's ordinance include minimizing or preventing the loss of wildlife habitat and other vegetation, and helping to protect special habitat types. SEPA was enacted to ensure that decision-makers consider environmental consequences before taking action and to assure the opportunity for public review of development plans and projects. SEPA requires that environmental review occur early in the development review process. The environmental review is designed to ask critical questions about possible impacts on

the environment and the actions that can be taken to avoid or mitigate those impacts.

and may be appealed to the City's Hearing Examiner or the courts.

SEPA reviews proposals that establish a new use or expand an existing use. The thresholds for SEPA review for new construction are the same as the thresholds for Design Review. Many projects going through a change-of-use review are also subject to SEPA review, depending on the size of the project or the differences between the uses. For example, changing from an office to a retail use doesn't require review under SEPA, but changing from an office to a warehouse might.

SEPA requires review of how a project might impact the following elements of the environment:

- Earth
- Air quality
- Water
- Plants
- Animals
- Energy and Natural Resources
- Environmental Health
- Land and Shoreline Use
- Housing
- Aesthetics
- Light and Glare
- Recreation
- Historic and Cultural Preservation
- Transportation
- Public Services
- Utilities.

Under SEPA, the City can condition or deny projects based on environmental impacts.

Some impacts, such as noise from construction, are routinely conditioned with standard limitations on construction timing. On other sites, project-specific or site-specific situations may contribute to adverse impacts that need to be mitigated with unique mitigation measures. Decisions under SEPA are subject to public comment

## **IV. Audit of Commercial Zoning in Seattle's Land Use Code: How well does the current code address the City's goals?**

The City's Land Use Code by necessity implements the Comprehensive Plan policy framework. Land Use Code regulations address how individual development proposals can meet the City's standards, which generally aim to ensure overall compatibility of uses, e.g., avoiding serious negative consequences caused by proximity of different land uses, and creating the environments envisioned in the City's and neighborhood plans. The commercial zoning code (SMC 23.47) provides detailed regulations that address physical features of development (size, density, landscaping, screening, parking, etc.), when and how certain uses are permissible, and how to control certain side effects of commercial activities, such as noise and odor.

In order to improve legibility and create a clearer Commercial Land Use Code that furthers City goals and the Comprehensive Plan's Urban Village Strategy, two analyses were performed:

- The code's provisions were analyzed to compare code provisions to the Comprehensive Plan's goals.
- The code was reviewed to identify those elements of the code that make it difficult to use.

## A. *Relationship to Plans and Policies*

Some aspects of the Land Use Code have a clearer relationship to the Comprehensive Plan, and do a better job of forwarding the plan's goals and policies, than other sections do.

**Table IV-1**

### **SUMMARY OF OVERALL CONSISTENCY OF ZONING, COMPREHENSIVE PLAN INTENTS**

#### **Issues where the Land Use Code could better implement the Comprehensive Plan**

Land Use	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Current zoning provides for minimal differences between areas inside and outside of Urban Centers and Villages in spite of the areas' different roles in accommodating future growth.</li> <li>2. The distinctions among NC1, 2 and 3 zones are possibly less important today than when originally established.</li> </ol>
Mixed Use	Definition of the preferred mixes of uses in the various C and NC zone categories likely should be updated, including in relation to pedestrian environments.
Pedestrian Environments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All Urban Centers and Urban Villages are intended to have highly-pedestrian and transit-oriented cores. The Neighborhood Commercial zones currently establish that environment, but aspects of the P1 and P2 designations could help strengthen the pedestrian core of a neighborhood in all NC zones.</li> <li>2. The Comprehensive Plan establishes a greater interest in fitting residential development into pedestrian environments, which were originally conceived as primarily retail/service commercial districts.</li> </ol>
Single Purpose Residential Development	There may be a need to better clarify where single purpose residential development is permitted. Current regulations identify locations in some urban villages where such development is permitted or prohibited, but there has not been a comprehensive look at the issue in light of the urban village strategy of reducing development of commercial strips along arterials and focusing commercial growth in nodes.
Bulk and Scale	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Building bulk and scale regulations, particularly with respect to upper floors of residential uses, likely should be updated to ensure optimal consistency with Comprehensive Plan intent for Urban Center and Village growth.</li> </ol>
Parking	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Current parking ratios require may require more parking than is demanded, depending on the type of area.</li> <li>2. If the code's parking requirements were written to further the urban village strategy, they could reduce costs of development and encourage more pedestrian and transit-oriented development.</li> </ol>

**Topics where the Land Use Code furthers Comprehensive Plan Goals**

Height	Consistent policy basis that allows for a range of heights in order to create different intensities and characters of neighborhoods, consistent with the urban village strategy.
Open Space	Consistent policy basis that emphasizes open space usable for residents, as well as light and air (relationship to building bulk) and recreation opportunities.
Landmark Districts	Consistent policy basis that states the value of preserving designated landmark structures and areas. Flexibility from development standards is advised.
Screening and Landscaping	Consistent policy basis encouraging screening and landscaping for aesthetics, resolution of visual impacts, compatibility and maintaining continuity of land uses at street level.
Special purpose/impact control regulations:	
--Noise, Odors/Airborne Emissions, Light/Glare,	Consistent intent to regulate potential nuisances that could arise from large generators of noise, odor or light/glare, and to maintain compatibility of uses.
--Drive-In Businesses, Solid Waste, Open Storage, Signs	Consistent intent to regulate these typical elements of commercial uses that can cause visual impacts (similar to screening topic above) and contribute to incompatible conditions. Regulation of drive-in businesses and activities meant to improve aesthetics and reduce automobile/pedestrian conflicts and disruption of street fronts.
--Assisted Living, Home Occupations, Animal-keeping	Consistent intent to generally maintain compatibility when nonresidential activities occurring in certain areas.

At least two themes emerge by comparing the intents of commercial zoning and the Comprehensive Plan:

**1. The existing commercial zoning system is relatively consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, but the zone categories do not treat areas inside and outside the Urban Centers and Villages differently.**

- Several of the commercial zones are present both inside and outside the Urban Centers and Villages, with few distinctions in regulations. Ideally, the system of zones would identify distinct requirements that would more precisely support the different growth objectives for these areas.

- The current zoning system provides few incentives for private-sector development choices to further advance the Urban Village growth strategy.

**2. The commercial zoning code's orientation to detailed regulations and fine-grained levels of compatibility tends to take precedence over fulfilling the Comprehensive Plan's bigger-picture growth management goals.**

- The combined effects of several requirements that apply to residential projects, such as those for parking, open space, height and bulk, may overly restrict new development within Centers and Villages. This

may negatively affect developers' decisions about where and when to pursue new projects.

- Development regulations should be adjusted to better reflect density, intensity and compatibility expectations for Urban Centers and Villages versus other areas.
- Growth management objectives should be a primary guiding force in City policy, and zoning systems should more directly reinforce those objectives. Zoning requirements that impede progress in growth management should be adjusted to streamline the code and reduce process-related delays.

### **Code's relationship to neighborhood planning objectives**

The Land Use Code is consistent with neighborhood plan objectives, but could do more to support or promote them. There is essentially the same relationship between the code and neighborhood plan objectives, as there is between the code and the City's Comprehensive Plan, because the neighborhood plans are a part of the Comprehensive Plan.

Seattle's neighborhood plans are remarkably consistent in expressing their land use-related objectives, which collectively convey public priorities regarding future growth and change. The typical highest priorities are summarized below.

- Encouraging residential and mixed-use infill development that will provide more active urban village centers that better serve their neighborhoods.
- Encouraging improved pedestrian orientation in village centers.
- Encouraging a mix of housing types including more affordable types.
- Preserving and enhancing the identity, character, and aesthetic qualities of the neighborhoods, through quality design and appropriate development standards.
- Preserving and enhancing the commercial vitality of the urban village commercial centers.
- Protecting the character of low-density, single-family areas outside of urban village centers.
- Providing for adequate transitions/buffers from village centers to lower-density areas.

Neighborhood plans tend to support zoning that encourages achievement of these primary objectives. In some cases, specific zoning changes were identified and completed. In other cases, neighborhood plans indicate a possible need for future zoning changes. The existing commercial zoning provided a reasonably good basis for many neighborhood planning choices with respect to height, density, housing type and pedestrian orientation.

Neighborhood plans have been the greatest impetus for rezones over the last ten years. More than 285 acres have been rezoned from C to NC (auto-oriented to pedestrian-oriented) within urban centers and villages. Later, station area planning for light rail resulted in conversion of more than 60 acres from C to NC zones, with pedestrian designations added near future light rail stations. These changes were also supportive of neighborhood plan objectives.

## **B. Code structure and usability**

While trained and frequent users of the code can generally understand most of the code's provisions, it is difficult for the infrequent user to use and understand. Problems exist both in organizational structure and in the language used. Multiple designations and overlays, many of which can apply to the same property in some areas, result in the code becoming very complex and difficult to use.

Among the key difficulties with the code cited are:

1. Multiple exceptions that require cross references that result in cross references to other sections of the code, and repetition of the same idea in multiple places.

Example: (notes are in *italics*)

23.47.023 Standards for single-purpose residential structures

- A. In all commercial zones, single-purpose residential structures shall be subject to the density standards provided for in Section 23.47.009, except as provided for in the Northgate Overlay District, Chapter 23.71, and in the Pike/Pine Overlay District, Chapter 23.73, and except for Seattle Housing Authority development permitted pursuant to 23.47.004 E1e.

*This section repeats 23.47.009.A and .B, 23.47.004 E1e refers the reader to 23.61*

- B. In all commercial zones with a height limit of eighty-five (85) feet or greater, except those designated NC/R, single-purpose residential structures are prohibited.

*This section repeats section 23.47.004.E.1.c, except that .004.E.1.c does not include the exception for NC/R, which could create confusion.*

- C. Single-purpose residential structures shall meet all other development standards applicable to mixed-use development, except that the street level frontage may be occupied by residential use other than parking.

*This becomes confusing when one looks at the standards for mixed-use development 23.47.008.E, which states "Any new detached structure which contains residential uses and does not meet the requirements for mixed-use development as provided in this section shall be considered a single-purpose residential structure, and is subject to the standards of 23.47.023." In other words, a project with residential uses that doesn't meet the mixed-use standards is a single-purpose residential structure. However, a single-purpose residential structure has to meet all of the mixed-use standards, except for the street level use requirements.*

- D. A single-purpose residential structure developed pursuant to Section 23.47.004 E1e shall meet all development standards applicable to mixed use development, except that Section 23.47.008B shall not apply, and that the structure at street level shall not be required to meet the minimum (13) foot floor to floor



height specified in Section 23.47.008 C2.

*This is very confusing. It appears that multiple edits to the code occurring frequently have resulted in two ordinances (12034 and 120452) creating a new section. Ele within two months of each other, the first of which dealt with Seattle Housing Authority property and the second of which dealt with station area overlays. The station area overlay language remains in the code, but this was meant to refer to the Seattle Housing Authority language.*

Redundancies, such as those in this section result in a difficult code to read and use. By cross-referencing multiple sections, there is the danger of references becoming out of date, or superseded. This type of cross-referencing makes the code difficult to use – the reader must keep in mind multiple sections of the code at the same time.

2. Descriptions of conditions that could be displayed more easily and clearly with pictures.

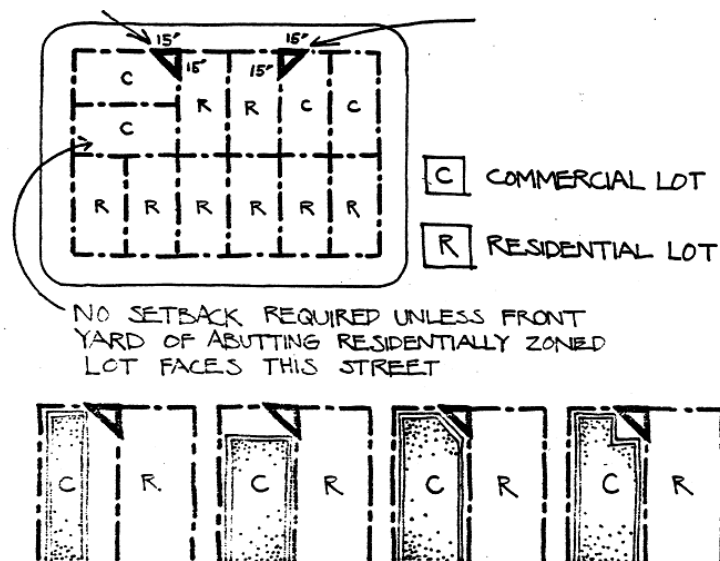
Example:

23.47.014 Setback requirements

- B.1. A setback shall be required on lots which abut the intersection of a side and front lot line of a residentially zoned lot. The required setback shall be a triangular area. Two (2) sides of the triangle shall extend (15) feet from the intersection of the street property line and the property line abutting the residentially zoned lot. The third line shall connect these two (2) sides with a diagonal line across the lot.

*There is a picture in the code which displays this idea, much more clearly. Because of its technical language, the text confuses rather than explicates the issue.*

**Exhibits 23.47.014 A and 23.47.014 B  
Setback Abutting a Side or Rear Lot Line of a Residentially Zoned Lot**



3. Long lists of standards with minor variations:

Example:

23.47.009 Density limits for residential uses

...

D. The following density limits for single-purpose residential structures shall apply in commercial areas where there has been a review and approval by the City Council subsequent to January 1, 1995 to determine whether single-purpose residential structures shall continue to be conditional uses, permitted outright or prohibited, and if the area is to be included within an urban village or urban center, an urban village boundary has been established:

1. Inside urban village

commercial areas as shown on the Official Land Use Map.

- a. In NC zones with thirty (30) foot height limits, the density limit shall be one (1) unit per seven hundred (700) square feet of lot area.
- b. In NC zones with forty (40) foot height limits, the density limit shall be one (1) unit per five hundred (500) square feet of lot area.
- c. In NC zones with sixty-five (65) foot height limits, the density limit shall be one (1) unit per four hundred (400) square feet of lot area.

d. In C1 and C2 zones with thirty (30) foot, forty (40) foot or sixty-five (65) foot height limits, the density limit shall be one (1) unit per one thousand (1,000) square feet of lot area except as provided in subsection D1e below.

e. Density limits in a C1 or C2 zone may be increased to the density limit for single-purpose residential structures in the NC zone with the corresponding height designation if the structure is developed according to the standards for NC zones as listed below:

- (1) Outdoor storage areas, per Section 23.47.011 E1;
- (2) Screening for gas stations, per Section 23.47.016 D3c;
- (3) Blank facades, per Section 23.47.016 E;
- (4) Drive-in lanes, per Section 23.47.028 A3; and
- (5) Location of parking, per Section 23.47.032 B.

f. There shall be no residential density limit for single-purpose residential structures in the NC2/R or NC3/R zone.

2. Outside urban village commercial areas as shown

on the Official Land Use Map.

- a. In NC zones with thirty (30) foot height limits, the density limit shall be one (1) unit per eight hundred (800) square feet of lot area.
- b. In NC zones with forty (40) foot and sixty-five (65) foot height limits, the density limit shall be one (1) unit per six hundred (600) square feet of lot area.

- c. In C1 and C2 zones with thirty (30) foot, forty (40) foot or sixty-five (65) foot height limits, the density limit shall be one (1) unit per one thousand (1,000) square feet of lot area.

*These lists are difficult to use and understand, and the intent of the differences becomes lost in the details. One alternative to these lists could be to create tables that demonstrate the differences:*

**Density limits for single-purpose residential structures in square feet of lot area per unit**

Zone	Inside Urban Villages	Outside Urban Villages
Neighborhood Commercial 1, 2 or 3		
With R Designation	No limit	No limit
Without R Designation		
30-foot height limit	700	800
40-foot height limit	500	600
65-foot height limit	400	600
Commercial 1 or 2		
30, 40 or 65-foot height limit	1,000 <sup>1</sup>	1,000

<sup>1</sup> May be increased to comparable density limit for Neighborhood Commercial zones with the same height limit, when projects meet the requirements in the following section of the code: 23.47.011 E1; 23.47.016 D3c; 23.47.016 E; 23.47.028 A3 and 23.47.032 B.

In summary, there is much opportunity to greatly improve the usability of the Land Use Code. Greater use of charts and drawings can help with long lists and complicated concepts. Revisions that minimize cross-references and redundancies will help users more quickly understand the provisions. In rewriting the code, the problems associated with multiple

amendments can be easily solved. And finally, the real intent of provisions can be expressly stated with a complete rewrite, which can help both situations where the code is too ambiguous or so prescriptive that it does not allow for variations in siting or context.

## Appendix I: Summary of Neighborhood Plan concepts applicable to Neighborhood Business Districts

Neighborhood Plan	Concepts relating to Neighborhood Business Districts
<b>URBAN CENTERS</b>	
<b>First Hill/Capitol Hill Urban Center</b>	<b>See Capitol Hill, First Hill and Pike/Pine, below</b> <b>Also see Central Area for ideas related to the 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue Urban Center Village</b>
Capitol Hill Urban Center Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategy areas: North anchor, South anchor, Broadway and 15<sup>th</sup> corridors</li> </ul> <b>COMPLETED ACTIVITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Green Streets (Type III) designated on 10<sup>th</sup> Ave. E at Roy, Howell from Broadway to Nagle, and Nagle Place from Denny to Pine</li> </ul> <b>OTHER IDEAS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Station area planning for potential northern Broadway light rail station.</li> <li>Encourage community college to apply for decreased height in their MIO.</li> <li>Further study "lower Broadway" rezone options "when station area planning is conducted..."</li> <li>Economic redevelopment and zoning analysis for Broadway – consider strategic rezones</li> <li>Commercial design guidelines to reinforce pedestrian-orientation, architectural quality, compatibility with surroundings and the special character of each [sub-]district.</li> <li>Upgrade the Broadway streetscape</li> <li>Upgrade the 15<sup>th</sup> Ave. E. streetscape</li> <li>Small-scale residential rezone analysis—in eastern residential area study rezoning to preserve small lots and accommodate new small-scale housing. Retain L3 but explore limiting maximum building width to 40 feet.</li> <li>Consider the Neighborhood Plan goals prior to any land use changes, and conduct "due analysis and public involvement."</li> </ul>
First Hill Urban Center Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a center for the Madison St. District: extend ground level retail "around the corner one-half block..."</li> <li>Encourage greater residential and commercial density on north side of Madison St.</li> <li>Various sidewalk/pedestrian improvements, related to the light rail station</li> <li>Work in Design Review to ensure new development has "no blank walls at street level", pedestrian-encouraging ground-floor uses, crime-preventing design techniques, appropriate materials, reinforced 1<sup>st</sup> Hill identity at neighborhood entry points</li> </ul>
Pike/Pine Urban Center Village	<b>COMPLETED ACTIVITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extend the Pike/Pine overlay to the C2 zone to allow mixed-use structures while retaining the automotive and manufacturing uses.</li> <li>Remove the Overlay's 1:400 sq. ft. density limit for SPR on the north-south streets.</li> <li>Modify the Overlay to eliminate open space requirements.</li> <li>Modify the Overlay to reduce the residential parking requirement to one per unit, and permit further reductions for existing buildings through Design Review.</li> <li>Increase the allowable distances between shared parking locations.</li> <li>Allow reduced parking for low-income housing [when there is lower parking demand]. Allow reduced parking if the developer agrees to maintain a portion of units as affordable rents.</li> </ul> <b>OTHER IDEAS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't require modulation in the Midrise zone, if building design is "articulated" to the Design Review board's satisfaction.</li> <li>Allow the option of seeking code departures through Design Review for rehab or redevelopment projects.</li> <li>Expand the TDR program so that rights from Pike/Pine properties can be sold to developers of Downtown commercial properties.</li> <li>Modify the Overlay to include a Community Heritage District that would provide preservation incentives and design review for rehab/remodeling.</li> <li>Green Streets and other pedestrian improvements in several streets <u>and alleys</u>.</li> </ul>
<b>Northgate Urban Center</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategies: Concentrate greatest employment, residential development in the Core;</li> </ul> <b>COMPLETED ACTIVITIES:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rezone large portion of Core from C1 zones to NC3 zones, and establish a Northgate zoning overlay.</li> <li>Contract rezone associated with QFC development on Roosevelt Way/N'gate Way.</li> <li>Setbacks, bulk controls, density limits, open space requirements, pedestrian</li> </ul>

Neighborhood Plan	Concepts relating to Neighborhood Business Districts
	<p>designations, master planning requirement, SEPA policy, and parking requirements specific to Northgate.</p> <p>OTHER IDEAS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Numerous planning concepts related to open space, transportation, land use and beneficial redevelopment of the Northgate commercial core.</li> </ul>
<b>Uptown Urban Center</b> <b>Upper Queen Anne</b> <b>Residential Urban Village</b>	<p>OTHER ZONING/PLANNING CONCEPTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow SPR in portions of the center, such as western portions of Uptown, in conjunction with special landscaping provisions to improve urban design of several streets.</li> <li>Create a historic conservation district in the vicinity of W. Roy St., Mercer, between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. W. with regard to several apartment buildings, also with new buildings reflecting the existing style.</li> <li>Write a "Queen Anne Community Character Improvement Plan" to preserve and enhance the character.</li> <li>Queen Anne design guidelines.</li> <li>Do not convert existing Lowrise zones to denser zones.</li> </ul>
<b>University Urban Center</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall strategy: Support vibrant commercial districts serving local needs and offering regional specialties.</li> </ul> <p>COMPLETED REZONES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rezone certain properties in the vicinity of 41<sup>st</sup> to 43<sup>rd</sup> Streets between Brooklyn Ave. NE and Roosevelt Way NE to MR and NC3-65.</li> <li>Allow SPR in [some] NC3 areas</li> <li>Rezone south side of 45<sup>th</sup> St, 9<sup>th</sup> Ave NE to I-5 from NC3-40 to NC3-65.</li> <li>Rezone a small area on both sides of the Ave north of NE 55<sup>th</sup> St, NC2-40 to NC2-30.</li> <li>In Ravenna Urban Village, change zoning of an area from C1-40 to L4. Also create a P2 overlay for 25<sup>th</sup> Ave NE in the NC2 area north NE Blakely St. to create a neighborhood "Main Street." Also, change the zoning from NC2-40 to NC2-30 along 25<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE between 55<sup>th</sup> St. and Blakely St.</li> <li>Develop special design guidelines for the Ave.</li> </ul> <p>OTHER IDEAS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop design guidelines for transition buffer between NC2 and SF zones.</li> </ul>
<b>HUB URBAN VILLAGES</b>	
<b>Bitter Lake Village Hub</b> <b>Urban Village</b>	<p>OTHER ZONING/PLANNING CONCEPTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Linden Ave. project", "Stone Ave. project" redevelopment concepts for subareas and corridors: Develop new neighborhood specific design guidelines for all new commercial and multifamily development. Preliminary guidance for those guidelines included: new development on Linden Ave. N should enhance the pedestrian environment with ped entries from Linden, plazas, benches, picnic tables, art, landscaping or other features; preserve Mt. Rainier and Cascades views from Linden Avenue; windows and good wall treatments along Linden Ave.; Aurora developments should provide ped and/or auto access through lots within the super-blocks; height/bulk/scale compatibility with nearby residential development and streetscapes; better landscaping in parking and other areas; utility undergrounding encouraged.</li> <li>All provisions designed to increase allowable density incl. RSL and SPR options shall not be implemented in the village or planning area.</li> <li>Future provisions for density increase shall not be implemented without a public outreach/validation process.</li> </ul>
<b>Ballard Hub Urban Village</b> <b>Crown Hill Residential Urban Village</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategy: Ballard Municipal Center development</li> <li>Accommodate most new housing and density in the core area</li> <li>Completion of Burke-Gilman Trail, remodel of Bergen Park</li> <li>More greenspaces and better landscaping treatments in right-of-way</li> <li>Economic revitalization of the business district</li> </ul> <p>COMPLETED ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop neighborhood design review guidelines.</li> </ul>
<b>Fremont Hub Urban Village</b>	<p>ZONING/PLANNING CONCEPTS NOT YET ADDRESSED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design Review for all commercial properties in the Urban Village.</li> <li>Neighborhood specific design guidelines</li> <li>Study the opportunities and impacts of expanding the existing pedestrian overlay zones to all NC zones within the Urban Village [with reduced parking requirements.]</li> <li>Create an overlay zone for live-work units.</li> <li>Various small changes to encourage different forms of affordable housing in residential</li> </ul>

Neighborhood Plan	Concepts relating to Neighborhood Business Districts
Lake City Hub Urban Village	<p>zones.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote additional pedestrian accessibility for shopping.</li> <li>Encourage variety of small retail/service businesses rather than warehouse style stores. Attract and support businesses oriented to local household and commercial needs and also businesses that offer family-oriented activities and hours of operation.</li> <li>Encourage varieties of affordable housing.</li> <li>Develop design guidelines.</li> </ul> <p>FUTURE REZONE CONCEPTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek to rezone parcels in the hub urban village from C to NCR.</li> <li>Allow rezones at high capacity transit station for townhouse-style residential clusters.</li> </ul>
North Rainier Hub Urban Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Town Center concept at MLK/Rainier Avenue (rel. to station area planning).</li> <li>Interest in pedestrian and urban design concepts</li> <li>Interest in encouraging housing</li> </ul> <p>COMPLETED REZONES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the Town Center, explore changing C1 and C2 zoning to allow for more residential/mixed-use projects (between McClellan St and MLK/Rainier Ave.).</li> <li>An NC2-40 to NC2R-40 rezone on Rainier south of Charlestown was completed with plan adoption at Council.</li> </ul> <p>OTHER IDEAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retain other existing C1 and C2 zones around Town Center to retain employment opportunities</li> <li>Develop urban design and site-specific development guidelines.</li> <li>Place a P2 pedestrian designation on Rainier between Charlestown and Genesee [although discouraged by City response]. NOT APPROVED.</li> <li>Support rezone of west side of 36<sup>th</sup> Ave. S. between Charlestown and Spokane Streets from L2/L3 to higher zone, re: SEED opportunities.</li> </ul>
South Lake Union Hub Urban Village	<p>OTHER IDEAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restore Cascade parking requirements for housing and review parking provisions throughout the district.</li> <li>Review industrial zoning along Fairview recommending buffers along the industrial use corridor. [C2 and SCM in proximity]</li> <li>Encourage the adoption of housing design that would complement the industrial uses.</li> <li>Discourage alley vacations.</li> <li>Provide incentives for infill development.</li> <li>Encourage new commercial development that supports the existing neighborhood.</li> <li>Designate minimum 1.5 floors commercial FAR requirements in C1 and C2 zones graduated to allowable height limits after the 1,700 housing goal is achieved.</li> <li>Study the Mercer/Valley corridor—prepare mini urban design plan—develop a set of integrated improvements for the whole corridor with few ROW impacts and only positively perceived or mitigatable impacts on the neighborhoods.</li> <li>Conduct a comprehensive parking study to determine needs and identify changes in land use for current surface parking areas within each of the neighborhood subareas.</li> <li>Integrate parking requirements of zoning with actual service levels of public transportation and uses in new developments.</li> <li>For projects of 20 housing units or more, require 5% to be affordable housing at 80% of median income.</li> <li>Prepare and adopt Denny Way and Aurora Avenue corridor plans in recognition of the importance of these corridors as gateways and recipients of intense future development.</li> <li>Establish concurrency requirements for housing constructed in excess of the 1,700 unit target in the Comp Plan. Consider contributions to parks and open space needs, transportation, transit and community facilities.</li> <li>Refine and adopt a pedestrian streetscape strategy and “green street” designation as a character statement for South Lake Union.</li> <li>Develop guidelines and strategies for supplemental open space, and develop an incentive strategy (such as density bonuses) for provision of pocket parks in future development.</li> <li>Establish Denny Way and Aurora Ave. N. corridors as potential receiving areas for TDRs from the Westlake district.</li> </ul>
West Seattle Junction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key Strategy: strengthen the mixed-use commercial core. Preferred improvements to pedestrian accessibility, parking, sidewalk amenities.</li> </ul>

Neighborhood Plan	Concepts relating to Neighborhood Business Districts
HUB UV	<p>COMPLETED ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow SPR in key areas.</li> </ul> <p>OTHER IDEAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restrict building frontages along California to a height compatible with “small-town scale.”</li> <li>Establish a “community based design review process that provides for input at the earliest stages.</li> <li>Create green street links for pedestrians in alleyways east and west of California Ave.</li> </ul>
<b>RESIDENTIAL URBAN VILLAGES</b>	
Admiral Residential Urban Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transitions: Adequately address the commercial scale as well as the low-density residential zones behind many sites.</li> </ul> <p>ZONING CONCEPTS NOT ADOPTED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don’t allow any variances, conditional uses (or any height above mapped levels) unless it can be clearly shown that it would enhance Admiral.</li> <li>Require all utilities to be placed underground to enhance the streetscape and character.</li> <li>Require a public process to consider any reductions in parking requirements. [Provide full parking, avoid any spillover].</li> <li>Consider methods to relieve the current shortage of parking such as encouraging developers to provide more parking than required.</li> <li>Allow for off-site parking for nearby uses in mixed-use parking structures.</li> <li>Discourage chain stores. Modify the appearance of franchise stores to “address the unique characteristics of the Admiral neighborhood.”</li> <li>Rewrite the Land Use Code to prohibit the following uses in Admiral: drive-through facilities, emergency medical care, gas stations, ambulance service providers, check-cashing services, pawn shops, auto parts stores, car washes, hospitals, automobile sales and rental.</li> <li>Other uses discouraged in Admiral: nursing homes, adult family homes, emergency and transitional housing, and large-scale examples of government buildings, light manufacturing, R&amp;D labs, skating rinks, theaters with more than four screens, blueprint/photostat stores, park &amp; pool lots</li> </ul>
Aurora-Licton Residential Urban Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain the current balance of residential and commercial zoning within the village boundaries except for specific potential changes recommended by the Neigh. Plan.</li> </ul> <p>FUTURE REZONE CONCEPTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommended rezone actions include: Allow future rezoning of a ¼ -block near 94<sup>th</sup> St./Stone Ave. N.; Study whether zoning changes would further the goals of the Neigh Plan using an enhanced public participation process –areas including SF, L3 and C2-40’ and C2-65’ areas just off the Aurora strip, between 85<sup>th</sup> and 110<sup>th</sup> Sts. (actions A5-A6). Intent is to create a core of pedestrian-oriented neighborhood commercial and residential development. Transitions also of interest.</li> <li>Develop neighborhood-specific design guidelines for commercial and multifamily development...</li> <li>Protect the character and integrity of single family areas...</li> </ul>
Central Area Plan: 12 <sup>th</sup> Avenue Urban Center Village 23 <sup>rd</sup> and Jackson-Union Residential Urban Village Madison-Miller Residential Urban Village	<p>COMPLETED ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Numerous rezones were accomplished with plan adoption of which many were C to NC or Lowrise to NC.</li> <li>Implement general and site-specific development guidelines to ensure compatible and attractive infill of new projects in East Madison business district (done already?)</li> <li>Evaluate possibility of converting existing L3 zoning on SW corner of 21<sup>st</sup> and Denny to NC3-40 or 65’ to promote redevelopment.</li> <li>Consolidate commercial opportunities along Cherry to promote development at this ancillary commercial area by rezoning to NC2-30.</li> <li>“Evaluate possible land use and zoning changes per the plan. Pursue those rezones found to focus on supporting a small scale, neighborhood serving commercial hub, providing for a range of residential housing types, allowing preservation and conversion of homes south of Union on 23<sup>rd</sup> to multifamily structures, increasing residential density moderately, and improving the pedestrian feel of E. Union St. (DONE EXCEPT ALLOWING LIVE-WORK CONVERSION OF HOMES ON 23<sup>RD</sup>).</li> <li>Designate Union between 18<sup>th</sup> and MLK as a Key Pedestrian Street.</li> <li>(Madrona): Evaluate NC1-30 from 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> and in conjunction, consider adding P2 Overlay to same area (DONE EXCEPT P2 OVERLAY).</li> </ul> <p>OTHER REZONE CONCEPTS</p>



Neighborhood Plan	Concepts relating to Neighborhood Business Districts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evaluate possibility of converting existing SF5000 to NC2-40': south side of Olive Way between 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>.</li> <li>▪ Evaluate possibility of extending NC3-65 zoning to increase residential density around Madison-Miller commercial area at 23<sup>rd</sup>/Olive St., by changing from NC3-40.</li> <li>▪ Promote NC along Rainier Ave. S. between S. Lane St. and Bush Place--consider future rezoning from IC-65 to NC3-65 (OTHER REZONES OFF RAINIER AVE. WERE COMPLETED).</li> <li>▪ Revise zoning to support existing retail area by rezoning from L2RC to NC1-30 at 30<sup>th</sup>/Cherry.</li> </ul>
Columbia City Residential Urban Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strategy: Strengthen Columbia City Core as a historic mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented commercial focus area.</li> </ul> <p>COMPLETED ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Amend all C zones in the area to allow SPR outright, and allow SPR outright in all proposed NCR zones.</li> <li>▪ Change <u>all</u> NC zoned areas to NC2R 40' with numerous exceptions, for greater flexibility to property owners, more SPR and a mix of commercial uses more compatible with neighborhood pedestrian oriented business districts and residential areas and to avoid large scale and very dense development (small town scale rather than downtown feel).</li> <li>▪ Rezone MLK east side lots from Hudson to Dawson from C1-40' to L4RC.</li> <li>▪ Rezone the C2 zoned area south of Columbia City to NC2R-40 east of 39<sup>th</sup> Ave. S. and allow SPR.</li> </ul> <p>OTHER CONCEPTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rezone the C2 zoned area to NC2-40 west of 39<sup>th</sup> Ave. S.</li> <li>▪ Create neighborhood specific commercial and multifamily design guidelines.</li> <li>▪ Relax the storefront commercial requirements for mixed-use structures in all NCR zones. Specifically, this means not requiring the 80% nonresidential façade coverage for mixed-use, while allowing unlimited residential density in mixed use structures.</li> <li>▪ Certain uncompleted rezones were associated with potential light-rail along Rainier Avenue S., which did not occur, including a rezone concept at Rainier Ave./Graham Street.</li> </ul>
Eastlake Residential Urban Village	<p>OTHER IDEAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implement an Eastlake Ave. Pedestrian District [includes smaller nodes that might not otherwise be P districts], includes removing discouragement of SPR in "R/MU areas..."</li> <li>▪ Mandatory design review for all SEPA-reviewed projects</li> <li>▪ Design standards/guidelines to preserve/improve views</li> <li>▪ Development standards and/or an Eastlake Transitional Massing design guideline for compatibility of abutting commercial and residential uses.</li> <li>▪ Creative use of landscaping</li> <li>▪ Encourage alternative and non-traditional housing solutions</li> <li>▪ Study possibility of code departures for covenanted low-income housing in Eastlake (incl. parking and/or density, height increases)</li> </ul>
Green Lake Residential Urban Village	<p>COMPLETED ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop neighborhood design guidelines for character and scale, including desired design elements.</li> </ul> <p>OTHER IDEAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lower the City's design review threshold to cover new construction in MR, NC, C and L3 and L4 with more than 8 units or 4,000 square feet of commercial floor area. Require all new construction and remodels to be subject to design review except in SF zones.</li> <li>▪ The C1 zone in Green Lake will become a "Transformation Overlay Area" meaning that long-range planning should identify zoning for after the Vitamilk plant is relocated in the future [recommended for NC2-40 and L4].</li> <li>▪ Create a Green Lake overlay zone that would require office buildings to have the same setback requirements as mixed-use residential buildings.</li> </ul>
Greenwood/Phinney Ridge Residential Urban Village	<p>COMPLETED ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider a P2 designation on Greenwood.</li> </ul> <p>OTHER IDEAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop a master plan for the Greenwood core commercial area (including the Fred Meyer-centered properties), seeking (among others): residential development above street level in C1-40 zones.</li> <li>▪ Improve convenient parking opportunities.</li> </ul>

Neighborhood Plan	Concepts relating to Neighborhood Business Districts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop design guidelines to contribute to historic character of the streetscape.</li> <li>Require sufficient on-site parking.</li> </ul>
MLK@Holly Residential Urban Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategies: Create a Mixed-Use Town Center; interest in better circulation and connectivity of street system</li> </ul> <p>CHANGES DONE IN STATION AREA PLANNING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider refining NC zoning development standards to provide incentives for transit oriented development.</li> <li>Evaluate rezoning the area of MLK/Othello to encourage mixed use transit oriented development.</li> </ul> <p>OTHER IDEAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop resources to assemble large parcels for transit oriented development and regional retail/service uses.</li> <li>Evaluate potential rezones along MLK to establish commercial nodes of activity [locations unspecified].</li> <li>Evaluate rezoning MLK/Graham St. to NC2, NC3 or alternatives to encourage mixed-use pedestrian-oriented development.</li> <li>Encourage a P2 overlay in the MLK/Graham vicinity.</li> <li>Evaluate refinement of parking requirements and lot design standards for C zones on MLK Way.</li> </ul>
Morgan Junction Residential Urban Village	<p>OTHER IDEAS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not approve any changes in zone boundaries, permitted uses or development standards within the Morgan Junction area [with a negative response from the City in the matrix].</li> <li>Recommend that City require sufficient off-street parking (above minimum code requirements) for new developments.</li> <li>Study the effects of requiring that no mechanical equipment can exceed mapped height limits for new developments.</li> <li>Develop community-based design guidelines, re: building height, setbacks, bulk and shape.</li> </ul>
North Beacon Hill Residential Urban Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key Strategy: revitalize Beacon Avenue as the Village Core</li> </ul> <p>COMPLETED ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beacon Ave. between Holgate and Stevens Street as a Key Pedestrian St.</li> <li>Several specific rezones were completed, to NC2R-40, to encourage additional residential and mixed-use development in the core.</li> </ul> <p>OTHER IDEAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop specific design guidelines including for types not currently covered by Design Review, including guidelines that support the community's character, scale, ethnic mix, cultural heritage and surrounding residential character.</li> </ul>
Rainier Beach Residential Urban Village	<p>COMPLETED ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow SPR in a portion of the Rainier Ave. corridor (already done, per neighborhood plan adoption).</li> </ul> <p>REZONES PROPOSED TO BE ADOPTED IN 2004</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Henderson St. focus: including potential rezone of Midrise south of S. Henderson St. to NCR or Lowrise zones (proposed with current R.B. proposal).</li> <li>Consider future rezones of C1 zoning to NC zoning in the central commercial core (proposed with current R.B. proposal).</li> <li>Consider a future P2 overlay designation (proposed with current R.B. proposal), and encourage various other improvements for pedestrians.</li> </ul> <p>OTHER IDEAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create design guidelines.</li> <li>Change NC zones to NCR zones to accommodate SPR. (Already in an NC2-zoned portion of the neighborhood).</li> </ul>
Roosevelt Residential Urban Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Town Center including a town square, related to a light rail station.</li> </ul> <p>COMPLETED ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt neighborhood specific design guidelines</li> <li>Allow SPR in the NC2 zone on Roosevelt between 70<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> Sts.</li> </ul> <p>OTHER IDEAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interest in distinctive pedestrian and streetscape improvements.</li> <li>Consider a new pedestrian overlay "P3" that would allow office uses, on 65<sup>th</sup> and Roosevelt Way NE.</li> <li>Encourage better transitions between NC3-65 and adjacent lower density residential</li> </ul>

Neighborhood Plan	Concepts relating to Neighborhood Business Districts
	<p>zones, by stepping down building heights [possibly including upzones of some transition areas].</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider upper level setbacks in NC3-65 zones with possible future planning such as station area planning (as well as step-down transitions).</li> <li>Explore development of community principles and more community involvement for future up-zones or contract rezones in key opportunity sites to facilitate their redevelopment</li> </ul>
South Park Residential Urban Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key Strategy: improve the 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue business area</li> </ul> <p>OTHER IDEAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize appropriate buffering techniques for each parcel of land where buffering needs are identified.</li> <li>Identify additional locations for urban trails.</li> <li>Take steps to bring about cleanup of toxic sites.</li> <li>Rezone properties with split zoning (from S. Sullivan St. to Henderson St., certain properties west of the 14<sup>th</sup> Ave. S. business district).</li> <li>Improve the quality and quantity of open space.</li> </ul>
Wallingford Residential Urban Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key Strategy: Improve the business vitality, pedestrian character and urban village character along 45<sup>th</sup> St. corridor.</li> <li>Identifies various pedestrian/bicycle improvements</li> <li>Housing: support ADU pilot, live-work concepts, good design and aesthetics that complement the neighborhood</li> </ul> <p>COMPLETED ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not allow SPR.</li> </ul> <p>OTHER IDEAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a baseline parking study; improve customer accessibility.</li> <li>Prepare a conceptual plan for 45<sup>th</sup> St. including needed sidewalk/street improvements.</li> <li>Develop design guidelines for the commercial district.</li> <li>Do not allow upzones or relaxing of development standards</li> <li>Consider in the future downzoning some L2 areas to RSL, and downzoning along Stone Way between 40<sup>th</sup> and 45<sup>th</sup> Streets to reduce height and density.</li> </ul>
Westwood/Highland Park Residential Urban Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key Strategy: revitalize the “triangle” commercial core near 16<sup>th</sup> Ave. SW and Roxbury St.</li> </ul> <p>OTHER IDEAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extend design review to L1 and L2 zones</li> <li>Consider future rezoning of L3 zones near 16<sup>th</sup> Ave. SW to L1 and SF areas to RSL.</li> <li>Develop Thistle St. as a primary pedestrian connection with amenities such as benches, banners, lighting, pocket park.</li> <li>Develop neighborhood design guidelines for sensitive infill development, for multifamily and single-family housing in the Village, and develop cottage housing options.</li> </ul>
<b>Other Neighborhood Plans</b>	
Delridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategy: Develop neighborhood nodes of concentrated activity.</li> </ul> <p>COMPLETED ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>About seven rezones were completed, some to NC1 and NC2.</li> </ul> <p>OTHER IDEAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop design guidelines.</li> </ul>
Georgetown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain Industrial zoning</li> <li>Preserve residentially-zoned areas</li> <li>Improve and redefine the Code’s description and intent of “high-impact” uses, enforcing existing requirements and creating specific standards for “high-impact” uses relative to their proximity to residential areas.</li> <li>Interest in mitigating effects of airport and improving overall environmental quality.</li> <li>Interest in improving streetscape, open space, trails, pedestrian/bicycle access and safety, and maintaining historic character.</li> </ul>



## **Appendix II: Commercial Development Case Studies**





## Mount Baker Court

3601 S McClellan St

**Completed:** 1930

**Zone:** NC1-30

**Lot Size:** 8,735 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Residential Units:** 8

**Parking Spaces:** 8

**Commercial Floor Area:** 4000 ft<sup>2</sup>

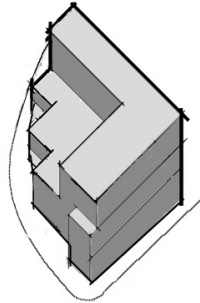
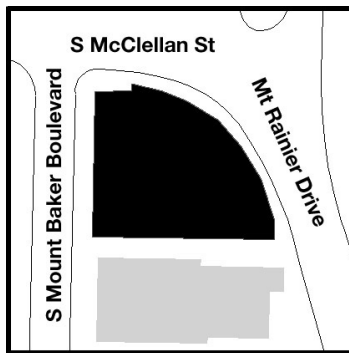
Ground Floor Use: Retail/Restaurant

Pedestrian Amenities: Overhead weather protection, continuous transparency, appropriately scaled garage entrance.

Building Height: Three stories

Principal Street Classification: 2

**Type:** Mixed Use



## Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)

**Commercial:** .46

**Residential:** 1.8

**Total FAR:** 2.3

## Project Description:

A three story structure designed by distinguished Seattle Architect John Graham Sr. The exterior is clad in a brick with art deco terracotta detailing and metal casement windows. No deck, balconies, or on-site open space is provided.

## Findings:

- An exemplary mixed-use project from the 1930's. The structure is highly responsive to the site, demonstrates a masterful use of materials and provides a wealth of pedestrian amenities.
- Deft integration of garage entrance that minimizes pedestrian conflicts and visual impacts.
- Appropriately scaled despite an upper level lot coverage of over 80%

## Design Review:

Constructed prior to Design Review.



## 225 at Greenlake

225 NE 65<sup>th</sup> Street

**Completed:** 1998

**Zone:** NC1-30

**Lot Size:** 12,688 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Residential Units:** 14

**Parking Spaces:** 31

**Commercial Floor Area:** 1,500 ft<sup>2</sup>

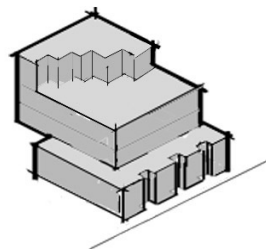
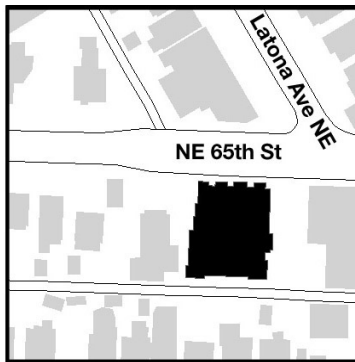
**Ground Floor Use:** Retail

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Limited by narrow sidewalk.

**Building Height:** 4 stories

**Principal Street Classification:** 2

**Type:** Mixed Use



**Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)**

**Commercial:** .12

**Residential:** 1.7

**Total FAR:** 1.8

### Project Description:

A four story structure clad in two-tone synthetic stucco above a concrete base with untrimmed vinyl windows. Significant horizontal and vertical modulation along NE 65<sup>th</sup> St. Parking access through rear alley. No roof top open space.

### Findings:

- Over scaled street level commercial is inconsistent with the adjacent commercial context.
- Narrow sidewalks prevent the inclusion of pedestrian amenities
- Ground-level street front modulation has the potential for offering useful spaces but unfortunately falls short
- Vehicle access from alley improves the streetscape.
- Upper level setbacks reduce the perceived bulk from the street – especially useful given the ceiling height of the ground floor

### Design Review:

Permitted prior to initiation of Design Review program.





## Royal Court

6501 35<sup>th</sup> Ave NE

**Completed:** 1989

**Zone:** NC1-30

**Lot Size:** 13,310 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Residential Units:** 18

**Parking Spaces:** 19

**Commercial Floor Area:** 1,500 ft<sup>2</sup>

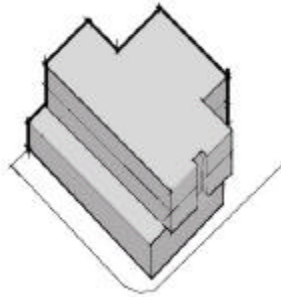
**Ground Floor Use:** Retail

**Pedestrian Amenities:** None

**Building Height:** 3 stories

**Principal Street Classification:** 2

**Type:** Mixed Use



## Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)

**Commercial:** .11

**Residential:** 1.3

**Total FAR:** 1.4

## Project Description:

A three story structure clad in white vinyl above a concrete plinth with horizontal beveled reveals. Parking garage accessed from both 65<sup>th</sup> Street and 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue. No rooftop open space.

## Design Review:

Built prior to Design Review

## Findings:

- Lack of street level permeability.
- Vehicle entrances cross pedestrian route rather than alley.
- Lack of street trees mars streetscape.
- A missed opportunity to strengthen a small neighborhood commercial district and an excellent example of the importance of Design Review.



## The Harrison

346 15<sup>th</sup> Ave E

**Completed:** 2001

**Zone:** NC2-40

**P2:** Pedestrian Street

**Lot Size:** 9.884 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Residential Units:** 19

**Parking Spaces:** 20

**Commercial Floor Area:** 4,200 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Ground Floor Use:** Retail, Restaurant

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Wide sidewalks, high level of transparency, outdoor seating, landscaping, planters, and overhead weather protection.

**Building Height:** Four stories

**Principal Street Classification:** 2

**Type:** Mixed Use

### Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)

**Commercial:** .42

**Residential:** 1.3

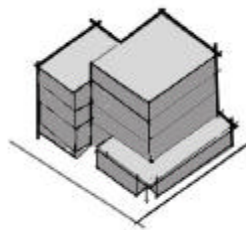
**Total FAR:** 1.8

### Project Description:

This Capitol Hill Housing Improvement Program project provides 19 units of affordable housing above three ground level commercial units. The residential stories are set back from the front of the building and a trellised rooftop deck above the commercial space provides residential open space.

### Findings:

- The project effectively integrates into the adjacent residential and commercial development.
- The street level retail is well -detailed and highly transparent.
- An excellent project improved through Design Review.



### Design Review:

#### Guidelines

- Provide a pedestrian-friendly environment-- consider stepping back the second floor from 15<sup>th</sup> Ave E.
- Access for vehicles should be from the alley.
- Consider the surrounding architectural styles and relate to the better examples in the neighborhood.

#### Departures

- Reduction in required open space.
- Elimination of street tree requirement on 15<sup>th</sup> Ave E
- Elimination of fencing requirement along the alley



## The Allegro

4115 Roosevelt Way NE

**Completed:** 1998

**Zone:** C1-65

**Lot Size:** 20,283 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Residential Units:** 88

**Parking Spaces:** 126

**Commercial Floor Area:** 6,450 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Ground Floor Use:** Retail

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Overhead weather protection.

**Building Height:** Six stories

**Principal Street Classification:** 1

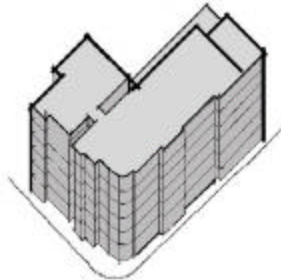
**Type:** Mixed Use

### Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)

**Commercial:** .32

**Residential:** 3.2

**Total FAR:** 3.5



### Project Description:

A six story structure clad in a multicolored synthetic stucco above a split face CMU base with untrimmed vinyl windows and balustraded openings. Variegated width modulations along Roosevelt and 41st, but little modulation in height. Rooftop provides primary open space.

### Findings:

- Pedestrian realm compromised by narrow ROW and lack of upper level modulation.
- More open space along the NE corner of the building would improve streetscape.
- Parking access from 9<sup>th</sup> Ave might have improved pedestrian environment.

### Design Review:

#### Design Guidance

- Build on Roosevelt emerging pedestrian character
- Emphasize the corner of the building
- Maximize street level glazing
- Design the project with the assumption the site to the west will be redeveloped.
- Use common roof terrace and individual decks to meet open space requirement
- Use of brick along the base is encouraged
- Use sensitivity in the placement of garage entrances.
- Use landscaping to cover blank walls
- Match existing street tree types, spacing and grates.

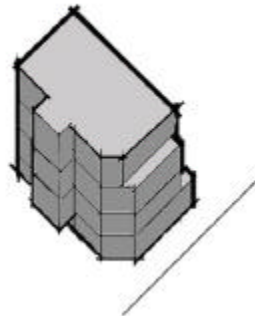
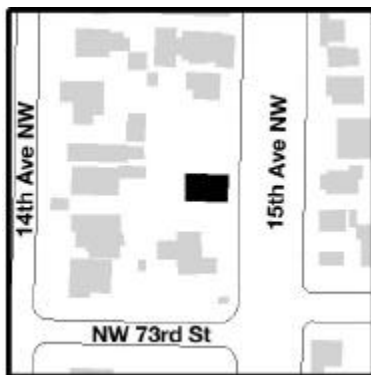
#### Departures

- Reduce the amount of lineal frontage of commercial use at street level
- Reduce required open space by 2,400 SF
- Reduce required setback from 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE



7311 15<sup>th</sup>  
7311 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW  
**Completed:** 2003

**Zone:** NC2-40  
**Lot Size:** 4,400 ft<sup>2</sup>  
**Residential Units:** 8  
**Parking Spaces:** 9  
**Commercial Floor Area:** 805 ft<sup>2</sup>  
**Ground Floor Use:** Medical Services  
**Pedestrian Amenities:** Limited due to narrow sidewalk.  
**Building Height:** Four stories  
**Principal Street Classification:** 1



**Type:** Mixed Use

**Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)**  
**Commercial:** .18  
**Residential:** 1.9  
**Total FAR:** 2.1

**Project Description:**

A 4 story structure clad in synthetic stucco above a latticed concrete base with trimmed vinyl windows and prominent cornices. Parking in rear; main entrance from chamfered SE corner.

**Findings:**

- A narrow sidewalk adjacent to a Class 1 arterial hinders opportunities for a successful pedestrian realm.
- Project marred by a exposed and ill-defined vehicular access and awkward sight triangle.
- Will benefit from future commercial infill.

**Design Review:**

**Design Guidance**

- Parking at the rear of the project should be lit 24 a day.
- Landscaping should be employed to screen project from single family zone to the west.

**Departures**

None





## Pike Lofts

303 East Pike Street

**Completed:** 1998

**Zone:** NC3-65

**Lot Size:** 17,700 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Residential Units:** 57

**Parking Spaces:** 80

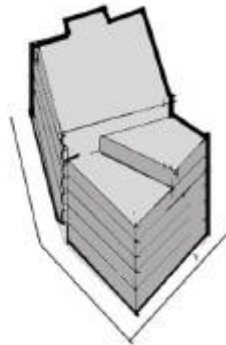
**Commercial Floor Area:** 5,750 ft<sup>2</sup>

Ground Floor Use: 2580 ft<sup>2</sup> retail; 2700 ft<sup>2</sup> restaurant

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Overhead weather protection, landscaping, pedestrian lighting (sconces), high level of transparency.

**Building Height:** Seven stories

Principal Street Classification: 2



**Type:** Mixed Use

**Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)**

**Commercial:** .32

**Residential:** 3.4

**Total FAR:** 3.7

### Project Description:

Pike Lofts building is located within the Pike/Pine overlay. The project consists of 57 condominium units above three commercial spaces. Open space is located on rooftop decks.

### Findings:

- Exceptionally well designed street level storefronts, deft façade articulation and a thoughtful response to an irregular site make this project a model example of a large mixed-use project.

### Design Review:

#### Design Review:

##### Design Guidance

- The Board was pleased by the direction of the project and no specific guidance or conditions were provided.

#### Departures

- Reduce the width of two-way driveways to 12'
- Reduce the east bay height to 12'3" from the required 13'
- Increase lot coverage by 87 ft<sup>2</sup>
- Reduce required open space by .7%
- Provide Street level commercial uses only on E Pike St.



## Madison Crossing

1600 E Madison

**Completed:** 1998

**Zone:** NC3-65

**Lot Size:** 19,450 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Residential Units:** 24

**Parking Spaces:** 64

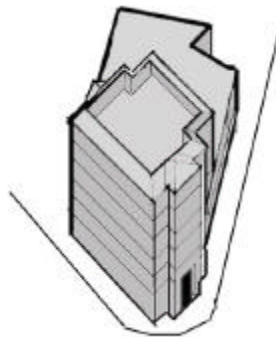
**Commercial Floor Area:** 14,500 ft<sup>2</sup>

Ground Floor Use: Retail (Grocery Store)

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Overhead weather protection, outdoor seating, landscaping, pedestrian lighting (sconces)

**Building Height:** Six Stories

**Principal Street Classification:** 1



**Type:** Mixed Use

**Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)**

**Commercial:** .82

**Residential:** 1.7

**Total FAR:** 2.5

### Project Description:

A six story structure comprised of four levels of apartments above a grocery store. Service access to the grocery store is via the alley. Parking is accommodated in a two story parking structure located on the NE corner of the site.

### Findings:

- A successful mixed-use project. despite the use of less costly exterior finishes.
- Effective vertical and horizontal modulation.
- Like elsewhere along Madison the pedestrian realm is compromised by narrowness of the ROW

### Design Review:



## Capitol Steps

1633 Bellevue Avenue

**Completed:** 1997

**Zone:** NC3-65

**Lot Size:** 15,750 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Residential Units:** 62

**Parking Spaces:** 69

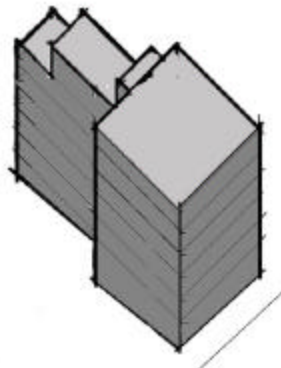
**Commercial Floor Area:** 8,000 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Ground Floor Use:** Office

**Pedestrian Amenities:** None

**Building Height:** Six stories

**Principal Street Classification:** 3



**Type:** Mixed Use

**Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)**

**Commercial:** .51

**Residential:** 3.2

**Total FAR:** 3.7

### Project Description:

A six story structure clad in white vinyl above a unadorned concrete base with untrimmed vinyl windows and a combination of covered and uncovered decks.. Vehicle access is from both Melrose and Bellevue Avenues.

### Findings:

- This project suffers from a paucity of pedestrian amenities, lackluster exterior finishes, and insensitive blank walls and vehicle entrances.
- A lack of reinforcement of the existing streetscape and neighborhood context.
- Clearly could have benefited from Design Review

### Design Review:

Pre Design Review



## Elliott Bay Condos

524 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. W

**Completed:** 1997

**Zone:** C2-40

**Lot Size:** 13,240

**Residential Units:** 29

**Parking Spaces:** 44

**Commercial Floor Area:** 4,775 ft<sup>2</sup>

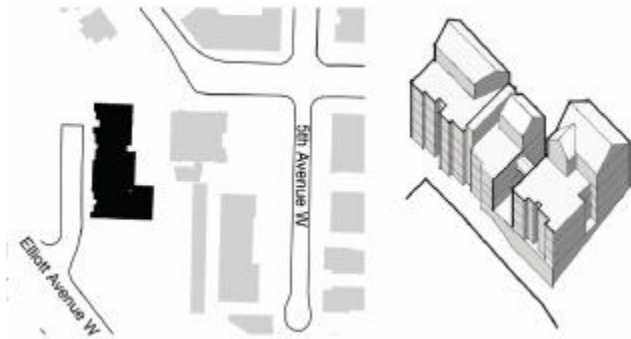
**Residential Floor Area:** 19,707 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Ground Floor Use:** Parking, Residential Lobby, Office

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Landscaping

**Building Height:** 5 stories

**Principal Street Classification:** N/A



**Type:** Mixed Use

### Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)

**Commercial:** 0.36

**Residential:** 1.49

**Total FAR:** 1.85

### Project Description:

A 4 and 5 story mixed-use structure on a steep site, on a dead end street off Elliott Way. Street-level office space half a story-below grade. Parking garage access from the street.

### Findings:

- Modulation breaks up what would otherwise be a very long building.
- Building overhangs combined with a narrow sidewalk create an oppressive pedestrian environment.
- The lack of a prominent commercial use at the ground floor results in the appearance of a residential-only structure.

### Design Review:





## 1800 Eastlake Ave

**Completed:** 1990

**Zone:** C1-40

**Lot Size:** 15,835 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Residential Units:** 30

**Parking Spaces:** 116

**Commercial Floor Area:** 12,881 ft<sup>2</sup>

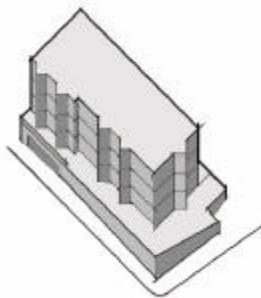
**Residential Floor Area:** 26,022 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Ground Floor Use:** Retail, Office, Hotel

**Pedestrian Amenities:**

**Building Height:** Four stories

**Principal Street Classification:** N/A



## Type: MIXED USE

### Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)

**Commercial:** 0.81

**Residential:** 1.64

**Total FAR:** 2.45

### Project Description:

A 4 and 5 story mixed-use structure on a steep site, on a dead end street off Elliott Way. Street-level office space half a story-below grade. Parking garage access from the street.

### Findings:

- The façade is mostly without ornamentation or details, giving the building a fairly austere feeling.
- The setbacks and modulation of the upper stories moderately improve the building's austerity.
- The project could have much more identity and character, and likely could have greatly benefited from the Design Review program.

### Design Review:

This project began its permit review prior to the initiation of the Design Review program.



## Fremont Village Square

3601 Fremont Ave N

**Completed:** 1996

**Zone:** NC3-40

**Lot Size:** 16,656 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Parking Spaces:** 36

**Commercial Floor Area:** 10,433 ft<sup>2</sup>

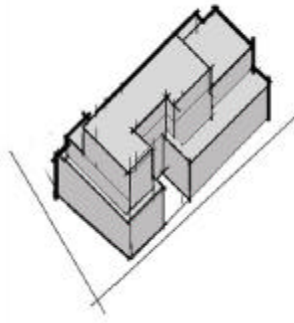
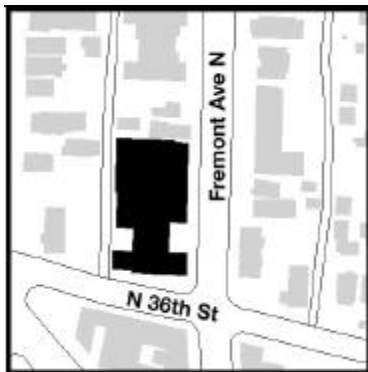
**Ground Floor Use:** Grocery Store, Restaurants

**Upper level Use:** 16456 ft<sup>2</sup> administrative office

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Outdoor seating, landscaping, street-edge-commercial, planters, wide sidewalk, overhead weather protection.

**Building Height:** 3 Story

**Principal Street Classification:** 2



**Type:** Commercial

## Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)

**Commercial:** 1.15

**Residential:** N/A

**Total FAR:** 1.1

## Project Description:

A three story commercial structure clad in synthetic stucco above a brick base. The top two floors contain administrative offices; the base includes a grocery store, and restaurants.

## Findings:

- Excellent use of horizontal and vertical modulation,
- Inviting pedestrian areas
- Thoughtful use of materials.
- An exemplary commercial project.

## Design Review:

Pre Design Review



## West Seattle Thriftway

4201 SW Morgan St

**Completed:** 1998

**Zone:** NC3-30

**Lot Size:** 76,650 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Parking Spaces:** 103

**Commercial Floor Area:** 32,000 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Ground Floor Use:** Grocery Store, Coffee shop

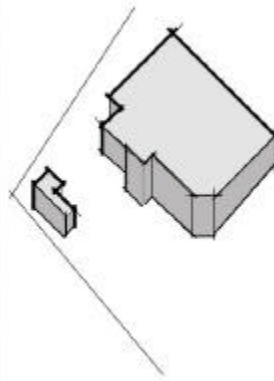
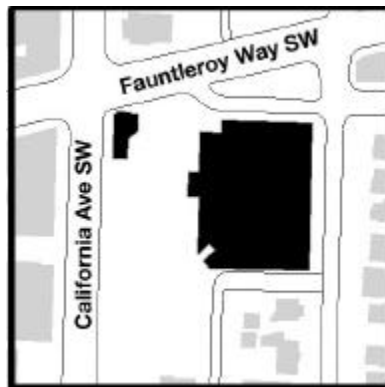
**Upper level Use:** N/A

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Outdoor seating, landscaping, street-edge-commercial

**Building Height:** 1 Story

**Principal Street Classification:** 3

**Type:** Commercial



## Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)

**Commercial:** .42

**Residential:** N/A

**Total FAR:** .4

## Project Description:

This large grocery store is clad in a variety of colored concrete masonry units with steel detailing and storefront fenestration. This project included a stand-alone 800 ft<sup>2</sup> coffee shop at the intersection of California and SW Morgan.

## Findings:

- Locating surface parking between the main store and California Avenue deadens the pedestrian realm.
- The inclusion of a retail element at the corner improves the pedestrian realm at the key California Morgan intersection.

## Design Review:

### Design Guidance

- Give special attention to the treatment of the corner
- Minimize the intrusion of spill over light on adjacent residential neighborhood.
- Use landscaping to screen the structure from adjacent neighbors and be sensitive not to block views with roof elements.
- Employ a straightforward commercial architecture—not a pseudo residential style.
- Blank walls should be mitigated by landscaping and architectural treatments.

### Departure

- Parking between the store and California Avenue



# Walgreens # 3101

500 15<sup>th</sup> Ave East

**Completed:** 2002

**Zone:** NC2-40

P2 Pedestrian Street

**Lot Size:** 16,200 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Parking Spaces:** 23

**Commercial Floor Area:** 10,800 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Ground Floor Use:** Retail

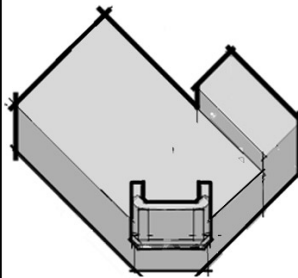
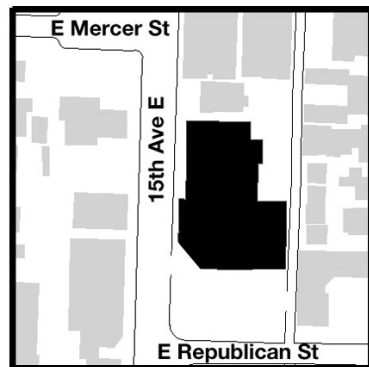
**Upper level Use:** N/A

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Illuminated display cases.

**Building Height:** 1 Story

**Principal Street Classification:** 3

**Type:** Commercial



## Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)

**Commercial:** .67

**Residential:** N/A

**Total FAR:** .7

## Project Description:

A one story drug store with very limited transparency. Expansive blank walls along 15th Avenue are mitigated by exterior mounted advertising display cases. This substantial renovation was not subject to Design Review.

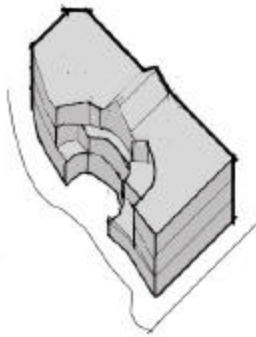
## Findings:

- Surface parking would benefit from landscaping and screening.
- The structure fails to match the existing context and detracts from an otherwise model pedestrian shopping district.

## Design Review:

Not applicable because project deemed to be only a change of use.





#### Design Review:

Constructed prior to Design Review

#### Lakeside Plaza

7900 East Greenlake Drive North

**Completed:** 1996

**Zone:** NC2-40

**Lot Size:** 21,900 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Parking Spaces:** 118

**Commercial Floor Area:** 34,242 ft<sup>2</sup>

Ground Floor Use: 8,926 ft<sup>2</sup> restaurant; 8,926 ft<sup>2</sup> retail

**Upper level Use:** 16,390 ft<sup>2</sup> administrative office

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Landscaping, pedestrian lighting, outdoor seating, overhead weather protection, planters, plaza space, bike racks,  
Building Height: 3 Stories  
Principal Street Classification: 2

**Type:** Commercial

#### Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)

**Commercial:** 1.56

**Residential:** N/A

**Total FAR:** 1.6

#### Project Description:

A three story structure clad in multicolored synthetic stucco. Retail and restaurant uses are at the street level with two floors of administrative office above.

#### Findings:

- The design and location of the 'C' shaped forecourt is a model open space and an exemplary pedestrian environment.
- Extensive modulation enhances the southern elevation.



## 2014 East Madison

2014 E Madison Street

**Completed:** 2003

**Zone:** NC3-65

**Lot Size:** 5,552 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Parking Spaces:** 13

**Commercial Floor Area:** 15,737 ft<sup>2</sup>

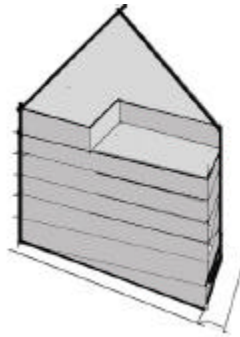
**Ground Floor Use:** Administrative Office

**Upper level Use:** Administrative Office

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Landscaping

**Building Height:** 4 Story

**Principal Street Classification:** 1



**Type:** Commercial

### Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)

**Commercial:** 2.83

**Residential:** N/A

**Total FAR:** 2.8

### Project Description:

A four story administrative office building clad in beveled horizontal siding above a rough stone masonry plinth.

### Findings:

- Madison Street's restricted Right of Way makes the distance between street façade and curb line too narrow to provide a comfortable pedestrian environment.
- Parking entrance adroitly integrated into structure.
- A well proportioned and thoughtfully detailed project.

### Design Review:

#### Design Guidance

- Make pedestrian entrance focal point of the street.
- Use stone veneer at the building's base.

#### Departures

None



## Rainier Beach Safeway

9250 Rainier Avenue South

**Completed:** 2003

**Zone:** C1-40

**Lot Size:** 225,027 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Parking Spaces:** 352

**Commercial Floor Area:** 52,000 ft<sup>2</sup>

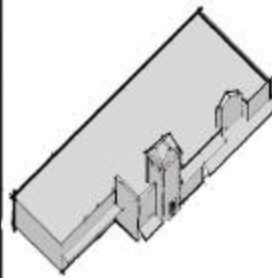
**Ground Floor Use:** Grocery Store

**Upper level Use:** NA

**Pedestrian Amenity:** Street-edge design element.

**Building Height:** 1 Story

**Principal Street Classification:** 1



**Type:** Commercial

**Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)**

**Commercial:** .23

**Residential:** N/A

**Total FAR:** .2

### Project Description:

A single story grocery store clad in multicolored synthetic stucco above a split face CMU base.

### Design Review:

#### Design Guidance:

- Greater modulations on the N and E side of building
- Limit auto access off 52<sup>nd</sup> Ave S.
- Encourage the incorporation of nautical themes into project to strengthen connections to community history and context.
- Use landscape to emphasize pedestrian walkway.
- Additional glazing on west wall of retail space.

#### Design Departures:

None

### Findings:

- The structure is well modulated both vertically and horizontally.
- Thoughtful Design Review input could not overcome the unfortunate decision not to locate the structure adjacent to Rainier Avenue.



## 45<sup>th</sup> Street Plaza

1100 NE 45<sup>th</sup> St

**Completed:** 2001

**Zone:** NC3-85

**Lot Size:** 11,155 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Parking Spaces:** 84

**Commercial Floor Area:** 47,669 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Ground Floor Use:** 4,887 ft<sup>2</sup> restaurant

**Upper level Use:** 42,812 ft<sup>2</sup> administrative office

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Overhead weather protection, high transparency, wide sidewalk at entrance.

**Building Height:** 6 Stories

Principal Street Classification: 1

**Type:** Commercial

### Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)

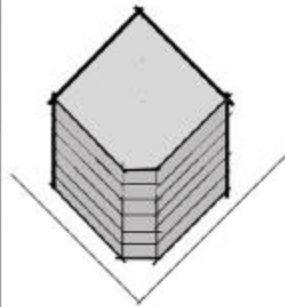
**Commercial:** 4.28

**Residential:** N/A

**Total FAR:** 4.3

### Project Description:

A six story concrete and steel structure housing five levels of administrative office space above ground level retail. The cornice line is enhanced by a pronounced metal sunshade.



### Design Review:

#### Design Guidance

- Supported the proposed corner entry door and recommended widening the sidewalk at the corner as much as possible due to the high level of pedestrian activity at that corner.
- Recommended that the garage entrance be located as far from the corner as possible to prevent pedestrian/auto conflicts
- Directed that the quality of the cornice for the termination at the top of the building could be an exaggerated sill monument.
- Use of street trees and planters at grade would soften the appearance of the building and enhance the pedestrian environment

#### Departures

- a 13 foot high loading area instead of the 14 ft height required by the Land Use Code.

### Findings:

- The chamfered SW corner helps to clearly identify the main entrance.
- The siting of the structure reinforces the desirable characteristics of the ROW.
- A well designed commercial building improved by Design Review guidance.





## King Plaza II

6951 Martin Luther King Jr. Way S

**Completed:** 2002

**Zone:** NC3-65

**Lot Size:** 41,290 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Parking Spaces:** 58

**Commercial Floor Area:** 36,680 ft<sup>2</sup>

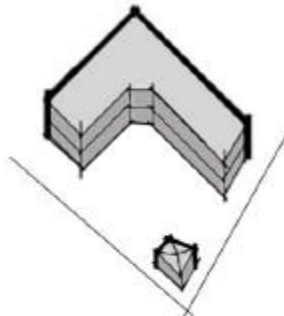
**Ground Floor Use:** 14,700 ft<sup>2</sup> retail

**Upper level Use:** 21,980 ft<sup>2</sup> customer service office

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Street-edge-commercial

**Building Height:** 2 Stories

**Principal Street Classification:** 1



**Type:** Commercial

**Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)**

**Commercial:** .89

**Residential:** N/A

**Total FAR:** .9

### Project Description:

A two story structure with a separate single level street edge retail building at the corner of MLK Way S and S Myrtle Street. Uses are primarily administrative services.

### Findings:

- A primarily auto-oriented project improved by the addition of a single story street-edge structure.

### Design Review:

#### Design Guidance

- Use architectural massing to help identify the entrance.
- Include windows in upper stories of west façade.
- Increase transparency of the NE corner the structure abutting MLK.
- Use landscaping to mitigate the impact of the parking area on MLK Way and Myrtle Street.

#### Departures:

None



## Northgate North

300 NE Northgate Way

**Completed:** 2000

**Zone:** NC3-65

**Lot Size:** 171,772 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Parking Spaces:** Approx. 1000

**Commercial Floor Area:** 321,757 ft<sup>2</sup>

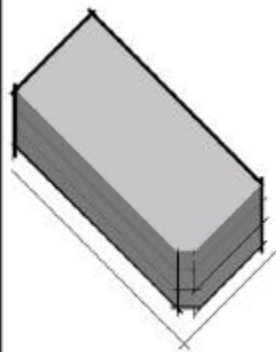
**Ground Floor Use:** Retail

**Upper level Use:** Retail

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Overhead weather protection, street trees, street level transparency along the east and south edges of the structure, wide sidewalks along Northgate Way additional landscaping to buffer project from adjacent residents.

**Building Height:** 3 Stories

**Principal Street Classification:** 1(Northgate Way)



**Type:** Commercial

### Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)

**Commercial:** 2.50

**Residential:** N/A

**Total FAR:** 2.5

### Project Description:

A steel and concrete vertical big box shopping complex includes four stories of retail and eight stories of parking across Northgate Way from a major regional shopping center.

### Findings:

- Chamfered corner helps identify the pedestrian entrance and strengthens the pedestrian realm.
- This project is moderately successful at creating a pedestrian environment in a predominantly auto-oriented commercial district.

### Design Review:

Constructed prior to Design Review



## Extended Stay America

13140 Stone Ave. N

**Completed:** 2003

**Zone:** C2-40

**Lot Size:** 97,965 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Residential Units:** 0

**Parking Spaces:** 144

**Commercial Floor Area:** 55,395 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Ground Floor Use:** Hotel

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Sidewalk, landscaped hillside, street trees

**Building Height:** Two stories

**Principal Street Classification:** n/a



**Type:** Commercial

## Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)

**Commercial:** .56

**Residential:** N/A

**Total FAR:** .56

## Project Description:

A 3-story, stucco-clad, 131-room hotel surrounded by surface parking set eight feet above the street.

## Findings:

- A typical auto-oriented hotel on a difficult site surrounded by auto-oriented uses.
- Landscaping of the short hillside between the street and the parking lot helps to create more of a pedestrian environment than is seen on surrounding parcels.
- There is no clear relationship between this building and the surrounding environment.

## Design Review:

### Design Guidance

- Plant incense cedar trees in front of the blank wall facing Stone Avenue North.

### Design Departures:

None



## Denice Hunt Townhomes

620 N 85<sup>th</sup> St

**Completed:** 1997

**Zone:** NC3-40

**Lot Size:** 36,294 ft<sup>2</sup>

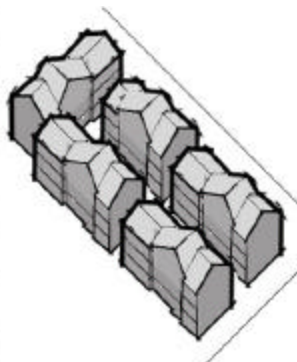
**Parking Spaces:** 35

**Residential Units :** 30

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Trellises,  
Landscaping

**Building Height:** 3 Stories

**Principal Street Classification:** 1



**Type:** Single Purpose Residential

### Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)

**Commercial:** N/A

**Residential:** 1.1

**Total FAR:** 1.1

### Project Description:

Five, three story structures grouped around a central green space. Parking and access are along the west side of the building.

### Design Review:

### Findings:

- A thoughtful response to a challenging site.
- The wall and gate effectively buffer the project from N 85<sup>th</sup> Street while not lessening the quality of the pedestrian environment.
- Extensive modulation breaks down the bulk of the five structures.



## Lynn Street Apartments

2401 E Lynn Street

**Completed:** 1981

**Zone:** NC1-30

**Lot Size:** 11,300 ft<sup>2</sup>

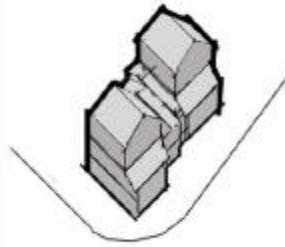
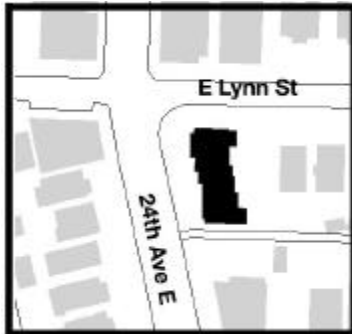
**Parking Spaces:** 7

**Residential Units:** 7

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Street trees

**Building Height:** 3 Stories

**Principal Street Classification:** 1



**Type:** Single Purpose Residential

**Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)**

**Commercial:** .N/A

**Residential:** 1.3

**Total FAR:** 1.3

### Project Description:

A two to three story structure housing affordable apartments clad in horizontal wood siding and aluminum windows.

### Findings:

- Setback and landscaping help buffer the project from a class 1 arterial.
- Massing, scale and architectural elements fail to match either the existing residential or commercial context.

### Design Review:

Pre Design Review





## Burning Tree Apartments

3200 NW 65<sup>th</sup>

**Completed:** 1984

**Zone:** NC1-30

**Lot Size:** 6,880 ft<sup>2</sup>

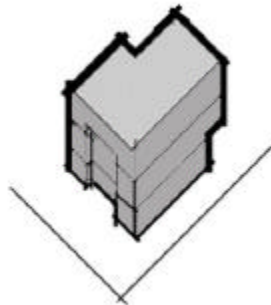
**Parking Spaces:** 10

**Residential Units :** 10

**Pedestrian Amenities:** None

**Building Height:** 3 Stories

**Principal Street Classification:** 3



**Type:** Single Purpose Residential

**Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)**

**Commercial:** N/A

**Residential:** 1.1

**Total FAR:** 1.1

### Project Description:

A three story structure clad in horizontal beveled wood siding with anodized aluminum fenestration; on a prominent corner lot. Parking is beneath and adjacent to the north end of the building.

### Findings:

- Street-level access to ground floor units could have energized a now lifeless corner.
- A missed opportunity to strengthen a small commercial node through siting, massing and pedestrian amenities.

### Design Review:

Pre Design Review



## 19<sup>th</sup> Ave Lofts

1816 19<sup>th</sup> Ave

**Completed:** 2003

**Zone:** NC2/R-40

**Lot Size:** 18,762 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Residential Units:** 47

**Parking Spaces:** 60

**Commercial Floor Area:** None

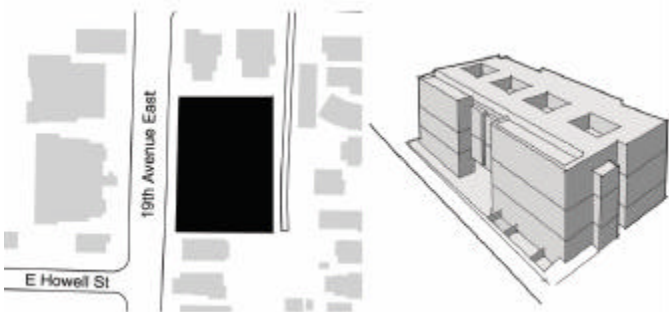
**Residential Floor Area:** 41,303 ft<sup>2</sup>

**Ground Floor Use:** Residential

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Individual street-level courtyards and entrances for the residential units at ground level.

**Building Height:** Three stories plus mezzanine

**Principal Street Classification:** N/A



**Type:** Single Purpose Residential

### Floor Area Ratio FAR (Approx.)

**Commercial:** N/A

**Residential:** 2.2

**Total FAR:** 2.2

### Project Description:

A four-story residential building on the edge of the East Madison Business district that includes townhouse and loft-style condominiums.

### Findings:

- This new development is a well-designed blend of building types found in residential multifamily and mixed-use commercial zones.
- Locating the garage entrance on the alley helps maintain pedestrian-oriented street front continuity.
- The first story of the building is slightly pushed back and off-set from the sidewalk to offer both an open space amenity and extra privacy for residents without sacrificing the pedestrian environment.
- The scale of the building is appropriate to the neighborhood and its surroundings.

### Design Review:

#### Guidance Given:

The applicant's proposal had a strong design concept that the Design Review Board felt met many of the design guidelines.

#### Departures:

Received a departure in dimensional standards for balconies (but provided slightly more open space area than required).